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PEAK ROAD PERFORMANCE

MAR / APR 2023
ISSUE 240

JAY VINE

WHAT NEXT FOR THE AUSSIE CLIMBING SENSATION?

TRUE GRIT

Gravel Handling Skills From Off-Road Masters

THE RULES REVISITED:
LEE TURNER ON CYCLING STYLE

BUNINYONG FACTOR
Anthony Tan On Aussie Champs Past & Present

FOUR BIKE REVIEWS
Cervelo, 3T, Officine Mattio & The Buffalo Bike

FUEL IN THE TANK
Dr Gemma Sampson On Gran Fondo Nutrition

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IMAGE: KAREN NORRIS

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NEW!

WHAT GRAVEL TYPE ARE YOU?

Whichever terrain you choose, the Schwalbe G-One series has the right tyre for every rider. On Unbound Gravel, Amity never knows what route conditions to expect. The new Schwalbe G-One R combines absolute suppleness with reliable safety. All gravel styles at schwalbe.com/gravel-your-style/

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BICYCLING AUSTRALIA

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Cover: Jay Vine rips up the Corkscrew climb during the Tour Down Under.

KOO
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Making The Most Of '23

2023, IT COULD BE ARGUED, APPEARS TO BE THE YEAR WE DESERVE … touch wood.

Without wanting to put the mockers on the months ahead, at this relatively early stage, the sun sure seems to be shining brighter on Aussie cycling. And literally!

As the 2022/23 'Summer of Cycling' draws to an end, we think back at what has been an incredibly memorable period for Australian riding enthusiasts.

A standout summer for a myriad of reasons, many of us could get out and ride again during the first dry December in what felt an eternity. Dreaded Covid disruptions were finally behind us, the Tour Down Under & Cadel's Road Race were back, and TDF superstar Chris Froome even rode the Melbourne to Warrnambool!

We saw tens of thousands of keen riders and fans back in Adelaide, we watched on in awe as Jay Vine won his debut TDU, and we enjoyed seeing many of the biggest stars of the sport here on home soil.

The months ahead are looking pretty damn good as well, with more people out riding bunchies, plenty of people booking & planning European cycling trips and more Australian pros than ever vying for a step on the world's most revered podiums.

On the home front, Bicycling Australia's Gran Fondo events are growing in both participation numbers and course options. Our second annual Snowy Classic - the gran fondo on some of Australia's best alpine roads - is coming up on April 1. And we've recently announced the Dirty Mudgee Gravel Fondo, an instant off-road classic. I recently rode the course and can faithfully report it is absolutely sensational! Keen to ride Mudgee road & sample the region's phenomenal gravel? Check out further details at www.mudgeeclassic.com.au

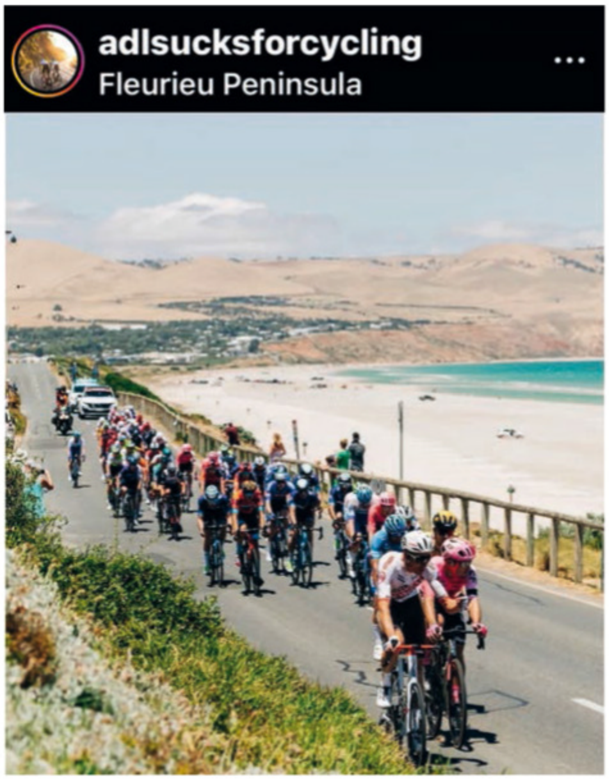
Yes, 2023 is looking like a super-exciting year for cycling and the sport as a whole. If there's one underlying lesson from the Covid years it would have to be along the lines of missed opportunities. With that in mind, let's grab hold of the year ahead and make the absolute most of it!

NAT BROMHEAD – EDITOR

WORDS: JAMES YAFFA | IMAGE:INSTAGRAM

Cycling In Paradise

JAMES YAFFA EXPLAINS HOW OTHER CITIES CAN LEARN FROM ADELAIDE, AND HOW WE CAN ALL BENEFIT FROM THE TOUR DOWN UNDER.



Enjoy riding Adelaide? #adlsucksforcycling is well worth following on Instagram, and its name is far from the truth.

YES, WE HAVE HEARD IT SO often, but I'll say it again ... how good is riding a bike in Adelaide!

I've been visiting Adelaide for well over 20 years, it's a mandatory annual trip for me as I'm married to the state! Each time I jump on a bike in Adelaide I keep saying "how good is this place for road cycling?" Or is that just the jaded perspective of an endlessly frustrated Sydneysider? The thoughts of a rider with a deep longing for high-quality hard bitumen roads, dedicated bike lanes and friendly motorists who appear to actually respect cyclists?

Kitting up and cycling in Adelaide makes you want to ride more regularly and that's the ultimate goal for the key players in our industry. The obvious mantra of more people on bikes is what our industry wants, and surely our governments as well.

Clearly, Adelaide does not have the population numbers of the eastern states and, let's face it, it was well-designed from the outset. On top of that, the city is remarkably clean! (Maybe it's time to take a good hard look at yourself Sydney).

Adelaide roads are generally wider, and the bike paths are immaculately designed and clearly marked. In the case of my own state, and specifically Sydney, let's be honest – cycling and rider safety is not even a consideration. Heck, it's taken more than 50-years for a ramp on the northern side of the Harbour Bridge!

Cycling in Australia's largest city is all but an urban planning afterthought, and sadly the horse bolted many years ago. Put simply, it's just embarrassing, and a shambolic mess and I won't waste any more precious column inches outlining Sydney's road problems and lack of cycling infrastructure.

> "...cycling in Adelaide makes you want to ride more regularly and **THAT'S THE ULTIMATE GOAL FOR THE KEY PLAYERS IN OUR INDUSTRY...**"

It's a vastly different story in Adelaide. The various relatively flat rides such as out to Glenelg, to Semaphore or the Outer Harbour. Or for those keen on extra leg strength work the Adelaide hills are 6km from the centre of town. The Old Highway to Crafers, up legendary Greenhills, or that all-time classic Norton Summit … what a beauty! I had the fortunate experience of testing what is surely the world's ultimate super bike on Nortons – the uber-impressive Cervelo S5. It's not often you jump on a bike and think "is this for real?" The performance of this bike is beyond impressive! If you haven't test ridden this super bike it's a must. It's a bike worthy of Adelaide, the perfect ride for such an impressive cycling city.

The twenty plus year history of the Tour Down Under has delivered so many benefits for cycling in South Australia. Culturally, the event has helped educate the population about cycling and I feel many drivers are in a more positive head space when it comes to sharing Adelaide roads. And that for me is a key reason why I love cycling in SA as you feel like you belong and have more respect from the public.

BAND TOGETHER FOR TDU24

Now to the recent Tour Down Under, an absolutely standout event, and definitely one of the all-time classic TDUs – full credit to new Race Director Stuart O'Grady plus Annette Edmondson and Carlie Taylor.

But one aspect of the 10-day extravaganza was a disappointment to many who support the event, and that was the bike industry pop-ups on the periphery of the official event village and expo.

Supporting Australia's biggest cycling event means supporting the Australian cycling industry. And ultimately this keeps you employed and hopefully your doors open.

As a small event organiser, I understand the time, commitment, expense, and sheer passion that goes into these events, and full kudos to TDU organisers and the SA Government who are delivering innumerable benefits to the bike industry.

The idea that companies and brands capitalise off the TDU by exhibiting in pop-up stores around Adelaide is akin to divorce counselling practitioners setting up a stall outside the church of the bride and groom. I see it as low-end tactics and I know I'm not alone in my thinking.

Imagine if the industry banded together in a more unified fashion and we all supported this WorldTour event on home soil. Participants would love it, the benefits would flow freely, and the big winners would be the sport and cycling industry as a whole. BA

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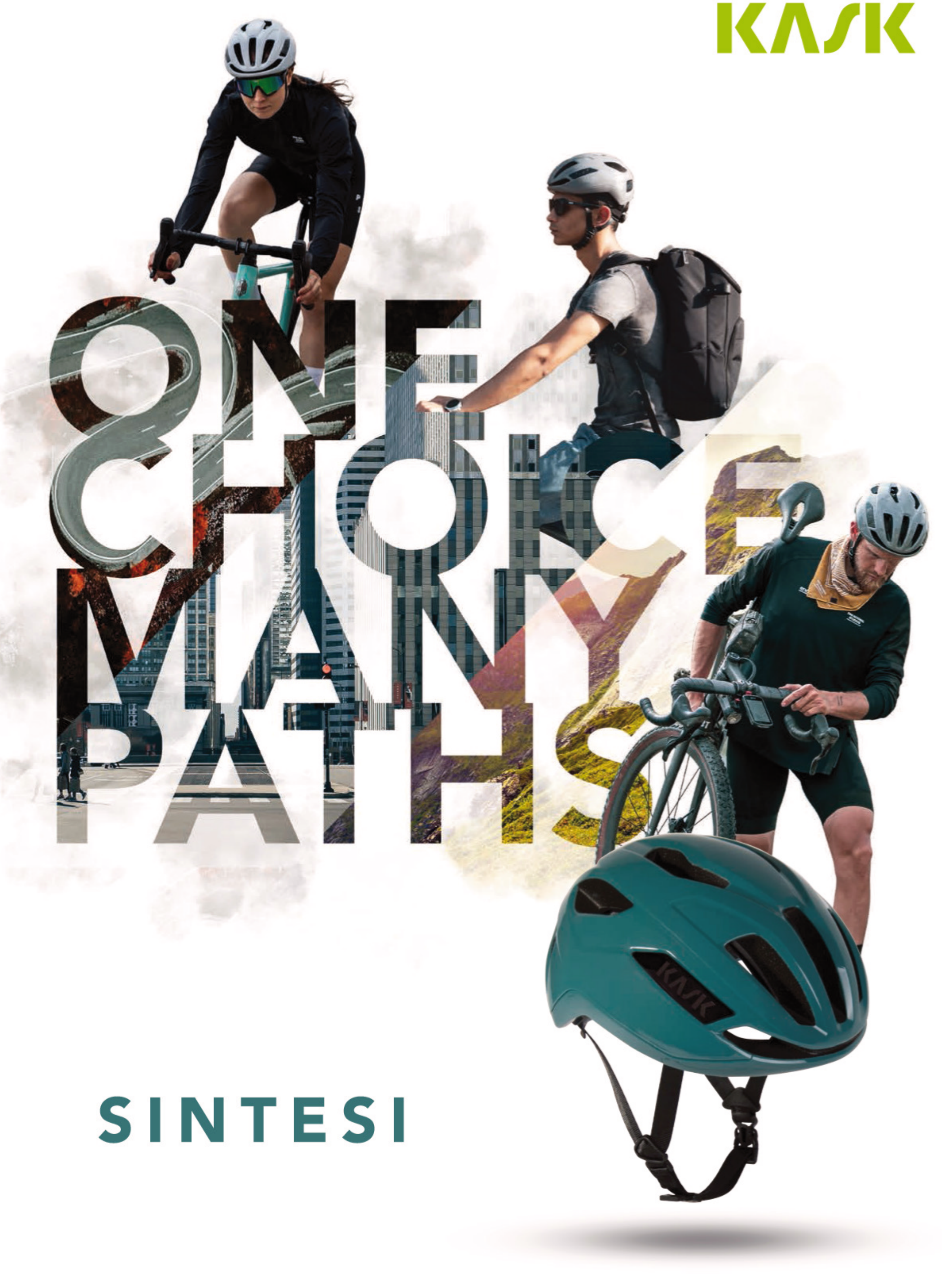
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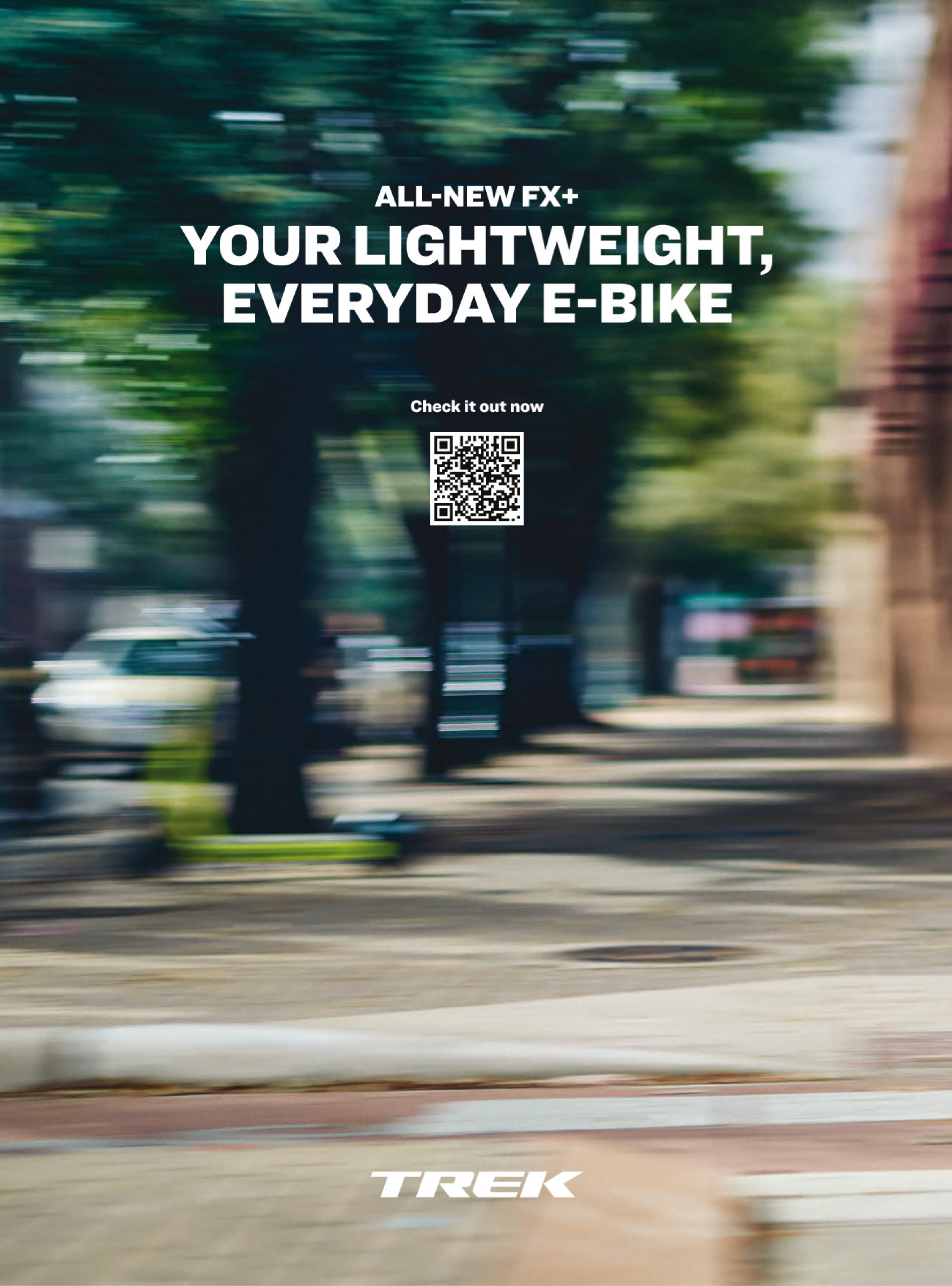

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WORDS: STAFF WRITERS

The Latest Gear

THE ULTIMATE ACCESSORY SPORT, LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF NEW CYCLING-RELATED PRODUCTS DROP EACH YEAR. HERE WE TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT'S CAUGHT OUR EYE OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS.

lonely planet
THE BIKEPACKERS' GUIDE TO THE WORLD
DISCOVER 75 OF THE PLANET'S BEST CYCLE-TOURING ROUTES
WITH DIRECTIONS & MAPS

THE BIKEPACKERS GUIDE TO THE WORLD

If you're ready to take your bike riding to a new level, The Bikepackers' Guide to the World by Lonely Planet is ready to get you moving.

Featuring 75 long-distance cycling routes from around the world, including Australia and New Zealand, this new guide shows you the way to get off the beaten track, design a local tour or plan an even bigger two-wheel adventure to far off places.

Each route includes handy hints for the best type of bike to take, practical information on transport connections to and from each ride plus details of gear to take and when to go. Detailed topographic maps of each bikepacking route also help you visualise the ride and profile charts show you what to expect.

Gain the confidence to set off on a two-wheeled trip with The Bikepackers' Guide to the World by Lonely Planet.

Ask for it at your local bookshop or visit www.lonelyplanet.com

FIZIK GRAVEL SHOES

Fizik's Powerstrap X4 are some of the Italian company's most versatile and practical gravel and adventure shoes yet. We have been riding a pair on the road, XC and gravel bike over summer 2022/23 and are super-impressed with the comfort, fit and finish of these shoes.

The core of the shoe is the Velcro 'Powerstrap' closure system which is simple yet very effective. Once secured on the foot the shoe remains that way until the ride's over and it's time to remove them. This overall fit and comfort is largely due to the ribbon style Velcro routing across and around the top of the shoe.

They feature a soft and quite luxurious looking leather upper, and a heavy duty nylon sole that incorporates a two-bolt cleat pattern.

We've found these shoes to be just as impressive off the bike as on. Walking - either into a cafe or during hike-a-bike while gravel or XC riding - is comfortable and delivers a feeling of sure footedness and security.

They fit true to size and Fizik offer a printable sizing chart on their website - just make sure you you print at 100%!

Overall, a versatile, comfortable and very impressive all-round shoe for gravel and adventure riders + XC MTB and bikepacking enthusiasts.

RRP $235

Ask for them at your local Fizik dealer or check at wwww.fizik.com

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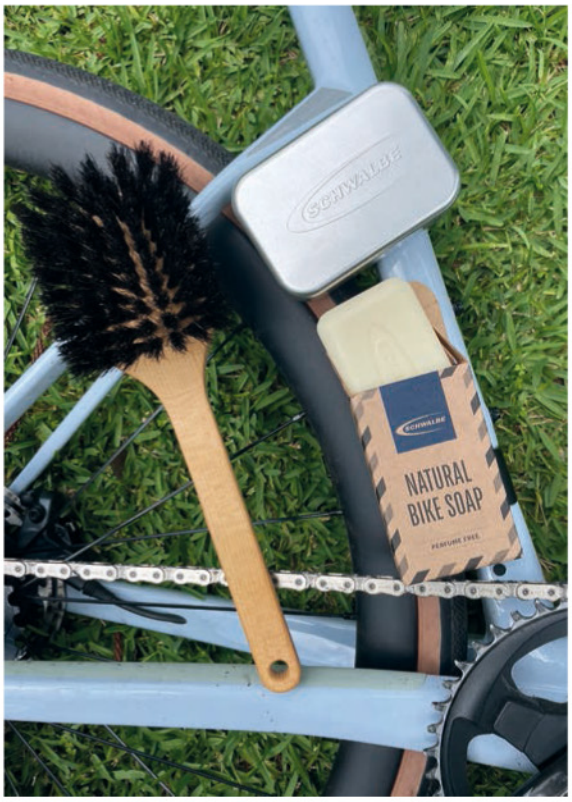


SCHWALBE BIKE SOAP

Here's something new from Schwalbe, an interesting collection that piqued a lot of interest when displayed at the Tour Down Under.

It's a bike cleaning solution with a difference, and that difference is also its familiarity.

The Schwalbe Bike Soap kit includes a cake of soap – much like the one that's most likely in your bathroom right now – along with a soft-bristled bike washing brush that also looks like it would be great for the back.

The soap lathers up nicely and cleans impressively. All natural and fragrance free, it follows the smart European trend of being 100% biodegradable and meeting OECD product guidelines.

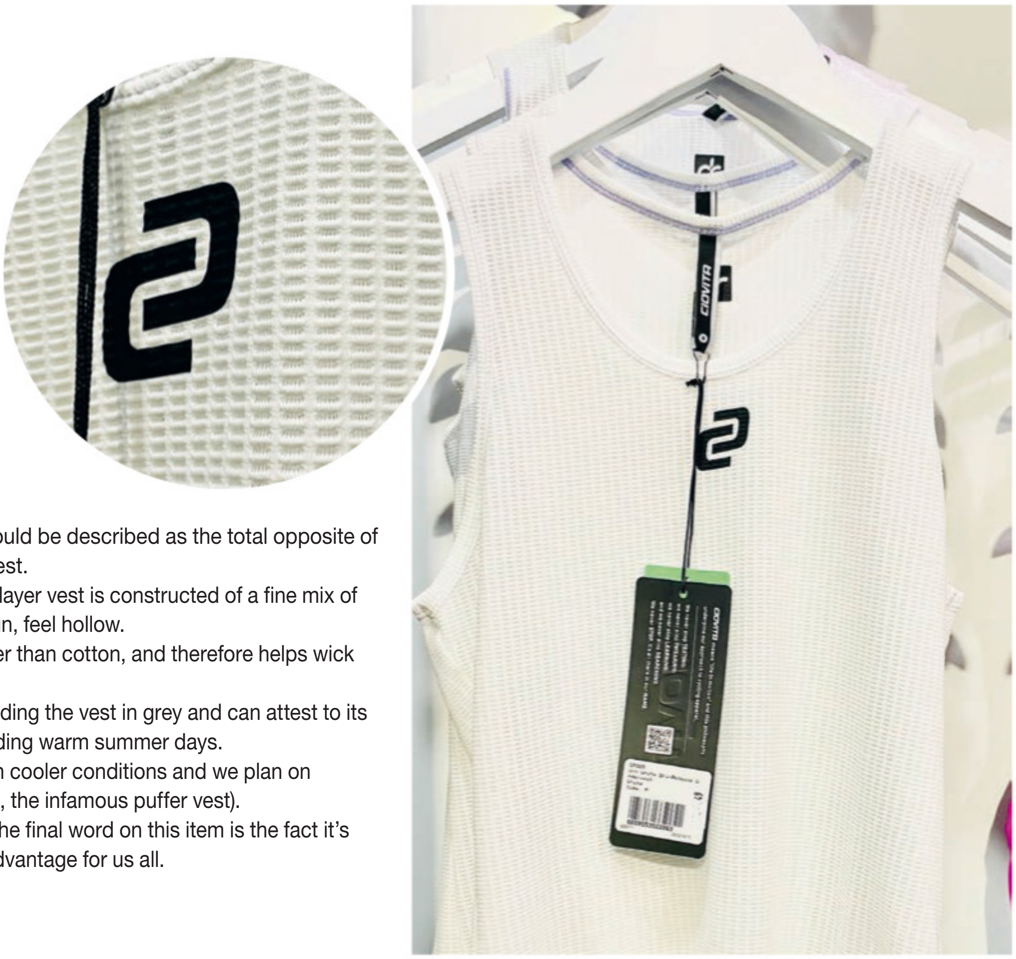
Made in Germany, the soap has been dermatologically tested, is free of microplastics and vegan approved. Importantly, it cleans grime from the frameset without damaging paintwork or bike tyres.

The Schwalbe Bike Soap is presented in an embossed and fully recyclable tin can which helps with storage and keeping the soap clean.

Along with the soap, we've also been testing the timber-handled brush that features organic horsehair. Obviously you want to keep this clean and away from oil or grease (sprockets and the chain), but the brush has proven effective for lathering and cleaning the frame of our review gravel bike.

- Tin can for storage
- 100% biodegradable natural soap
- Excellent cleaning effect
- No perfume and without microplastic
- Lasts for up to 100 washes
- Comes with horsehair brush

The Bike Soap Kit can be purchased from Schwalbe dealers – find your local dealer at www.bikebox.com.au



CIOVITA DRI RELEASE UNDER VEST

Big fans of the Ciovita range, this garment could be described as the total opposite of the company's unique cool-weather puffer vest.

Surprisingly soft and lightweight, this base layer vest is constructed of a fine mix of closely woven together fabrics that, when spun, feel hollow.

The fabric mix is said to dry four times faster than cotton, and therefore helps wick moisture from the skin.

Incredibly lightweight to hold, we've been riding the vest in grey and can attest to its silky smooth finish and cooling effect when riding warm summer days.

Ciovita say the vest performs equally well in cooler conditions and we plan on combining it with the Apex Contego Gilet (yes, the infamous puffer vest).

We could go on forever about Ciovita, but the final word on this item is the fact it's constructed from recycled fabrics – a great advantage for us all.

Ciovita DriRelease under vest - $49
More at www.ciovita.com.au

BMC ROADMACHINE X ONE

BMC's relatively new Roadmachine X is definitely one of the more exciting and drool-worthy new releases of the past six months or so.

A truly versatile offering, we are currently road-testing and reviewing a sky blue Roadmachine X One and that bike will feature in the May / June edition of Bicycling Australia Magazine.

BMC's Roadmachine X seems to be natural successor to the companies much-loved GF01. With endurance geometry, 1x SRAM Force, and 34mm WTB tyres on BMC's CRD 321 carbon wheels, this is a capable, comfortable and great looking bike

One of the standout inclusions is the stem and its 20mm of shock-absorbing suspension. A partnership with US company Redshift, internal suspension is provided by two elastomers hidden in the body of the stem. The bike also features a Fizik Argo power style saddle as standard, and we've found this complements the suspension stem system. Together the stem and saddle help create an incredibly comfortable bike, particularly on big days out.

At a glance, this allroad bike feels just as home on a hilly, fast-paced bunch ride as it does on firm, crusher dust style gravel. It's a blast to ride and looks great in the sky blue colours!

The RRP is $8499. More at your local BMC dealer.

FIXX
COLDBREW
COFFEE SHOT

FIXX COLDBREW COFFEE SHOTS

Fixx Nutrition is a relatively small Australian company making major inroads into the global sports nutrition scene. Kicking off in 2016, Fixx quickly became known for natural products that helped prevent debilitating cramps. Following two years of extensive testing, their popular CrampFix range hit the shelves and has pretty well been the go-to muscle cramp remedy ever since.

Fixx also offer a wide range of other natural solutions to aide athletes and the one we've been recently using has quickly become an absolute essential.

Containing the equivalent level of caffeine of two shots of coffee, Fixx Nutrition Cold Brew Coffee Shots are basically like having a barista in your handlebar bag or jersey pocket.

We've been using the straight Cold Brew; Energy Espresso, Mocha & Sugar-Free Espresso are also available.

Either throw back the bottle or sip half and save the rest 'til later, whichever way you take it this portable coffee fix offers a wonderful energy hit. It tastes great, helps keep you going, and is cost effective. We've been riding remote, out-of-town gravel trails with this lately and highly recommend it … nice one Fixx.

The Fixx Coldbrew shots are priced at $25 for a pack of 6.

To order or for more information visit www.fixxnutrition.com

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INSPIRED TO RIDE

2023 ORBEA TERRA

Looking for the ultimate gravel bike, and a platform that can be custom finished absolutely any way you like?

If you answered yes to that, read on. Orbea have launched their 2023 Terra gravel models, a range of versatile, go-anywhere alloy and full carbon offerings.

We took a close look at a full carbon Terra M30 while visiting the Bike Expo at the Tour Down Under Village in Adelaide.

Custom finished in royal blue, the bike featured 700c x 45 tyres, Orbea's downtube 'Lockr' lockable storage compartment and integrated mounting points to allow you to fit bags, racks or guards to further customise the platform.

With unique gravel geometry and numerous frame, spec and build levels available, the Terra is proving popular on the growing gravel scene. Several Orbea models including a Terra will be on display at the upcoming Mudgee Classic on April 29/30.

For more on the bikes visit www.orbea.com or check www.bikebox.com.au for your nearest stockist.

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CHAMPAGNE SHOES FROM SHIMANO

If gleaming white cycling shoes were all the rage in season 2022, could classy champagne be the colour of ’23?

In addition to the eye-catching champagne colouring, Shimano’s new RC903S shoes feature new lower profile Li2 metal BOA dials and a new crossover lacing pattern for quicker micro-adjustments on the fly.

The RC903S shoes also feature the company’s new heel cup with a smoother and more integrated appearance.

Shimano says the updated system will ensure a more snug and comfortable fit for amateur and professional riders alike.

The unique Dynalast shape delivers an expanded fit range to accommodate a wider variety of foot shapes and sizes, say Shimano. “The result is a new, secure, anti-twist, stabilising heel cup that optimises fit and foot stability, holding your heel in place to prevent movement during hard efforts.”

The Champagne-coloured road shoes will be available from sizes 36 to 48, with half sizes from 37 to 47. The retail price in Australia is expected to be $649.95.

More at www.bike.shimano.com/en-AU

NEW GOPRO CAMERAS

GoPro have recently released the latest version of the world’s ultimate action camera, the HERO 11.

With three models in the range, there’s the Hero 11 Black Creator Edition, the Hero 11 Black, and the Hero 11 Black Mini.

An incredibly versatile camera, we’ll focus on the model many cyclists like to have under the handlebars, the Hero 11 Black.

This latest incarnation offers a new larger image sensor for higher image quality. Still images are up to 24.7 megapixels and video quality can be set to up to 5.3K60 + 2.7K240.

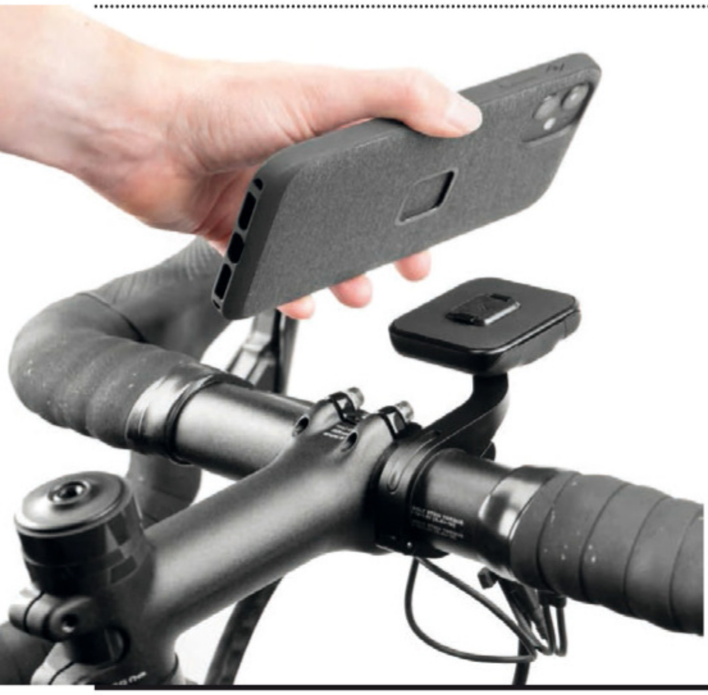
A key point for cyclists is the smoothness of the videos, with the latest model upping the ante even further and now offering ‘Hypersmooth 5’ along with an auto image boost mode and horizon lock to help keep output level.

Video highlights can be automatically sent to a mobile phone – a great way to view or upload key points during your ride.

It’s an impressive little unit, one that really makes you think “what will they add next?”

The latest GoPro Hero11 Black is currently available for $629.95 from www.gopro.com

11
BLACK
mode
GoPro



PEAK DESIGN PHONE MOUNT

So far as quality out-front mobile phone mounts go, cyclists are spoilt for choice.

Peak Design are manufacturers of what many say is the world’s leading phone mount, with their Out Front Bike Mount offering a number of benefits including the ability to flip up to film the ride.

A two-part design, the mount is made of from ultralight anodised aluminium and the case attaches via the company’s SlimLink magnetic/mechanical mounting technology.

An accessory mount is included and this allows the attachment of a front light or action camera. The kit also includes sizing collars to attach to various round bar diameters including 31.8mm.

A two-part kit, the Peak Design phone case is available for most iPhone, Samsung and Pixel phones. This slimline case features a square recess that locks into the out front mount plus various other Peak Design brackets, holders and accessories. Their website is well worth checking out, you can see it at www.peakdesign.com

Peak Design Out Front Mount $114
Peak Design Everyday Phone Case from $60
www.peakdesign.com

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'...Country Roads, Take Me Home...'

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WORDS: NAT BROMHEAD | IMAGES: SIROTTI

The Rise & Rise Of JAY VINE

NOT EVEN A WORLDTOUR PROFESSIONAL AT THE PREVIOUS TOUR DOWN UNDER, JAY VINE HAS ARRIVED WITH A BANG.

Even on a relatively flat stage of the '23 Tour Down Under, overall race leader Jay Vine shows total concentration and control.

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THE PATH TO THE TOP LEVEL OF GLOBAL CYCLING, the WorldTour, appears to have transformed in recent years with Aussie rider Jay Vine leading the way.

At time of writing, late January 2023, the male and female winners of the most recent two WorldTour races – the Women's Cadel Evans Road Race and at Men's Tour Down Under – were reigning E-sports World Champions. Those two riders? Loes Adegeest of FDJ-Suez and Jay Vine of UAE Team Emirates.

Dutch rider Loes Adegeest is 26yo, has just started her first season at the top level of the sport, and indeed, beat in-form veteran Amanda Spratt in the final sprint of the Deakin University Elite Women's Race in Geelong.

A former speed skater, Adegeest's journey to her first WorldTour victory has been far from conventional and the year ahead is very exciting for the rising Dutch star. We will have more on Adegeest over on the Bicycling Australia website soon.

With a similar backstory to the 26yo Adegeest, 27yo Jay Vine was the 2022 male E-Sports World Champion after winning the UCI-sanctioned, Zwift-based competition. In January this year Vine said he would not be defending his E-Sports Rainbow Jersey – fair enough considering his phenomenal summer of cycling and hectic race schedule with superteam UAE Emirates.

"The start of the 2023 season, winning the Australian Time Trial Championship and then the Tour Down Under, has been a dream," Vine said in his typically understated manner.

"It has seen me realise goals I've set and worked hard to achieve, and continue the wild journey professional cycling has taken me on so far.

"The 2022 season has also brought surreal moments including being crowned E-Sports World Champion, proudly taking home the Rainbow Jersey."

"Combining road racing with E-Sports has been important to me, to honor my development pathway through cycling as well as the privilege of representing Australia alongside my wife Bre,"

"But for now, this balance will have to shift towards my professional road racing, and as such I won't be able to defend my Rainbow Stripes – my commitment is needed at UAE Team Emirates."

Jay Vine started season 2023 in a similar fashion to his 2021 entrance to the WorldTour – with focus, direction, brains and a firm plan. But

> **"...TO THINK HE WASN'T EVEN A WORLDTOUR PROFESSIONAL the last time the Tour Down Under was held in 2020, and the previous winner of the race was Richie Porte..."**

if 2021 kicked off with a bang, 2023 started with a sonic boom.

Within a 12-month period he had secured a Rainbow Jersey (E-Sports), a National Jersey (2023 Australian Time Trial Champion at Buninyong), and the revered Ochre Jersey of the Santos Tour Down Under.

To think he wasn't even a WorldTour professional the last time the Tour Down Under was held in 2020, and the previous winner of the race was Richie Porte, and you start to realise the Jay Vine trajectory.

Santini
Santos
UAE

JAY VINE – THE STORY SO FAR

After winning the 2020 Zwift Academy, Vine signed with WorldTour team Alpecin-Fenix. Together with Bre, the pair moved from Canberra to the pro cycling epicenter of Girona in northern Spain.

One of his first major races with the team was the 2020 Tour of Turkey, a huge step up from being first rider home at Bicycling Australia's 2017 Bowral Classic, then signing with Nero Continental and enjoying a solid 2020 Herald SunTour result against big name WorldTour professionals.

Jump forward to the 2021 Tour of Turkey and Vine proved the previous year's result was no fluke. Again finishing 2nd overall, he firmly put his mark on the race and went on that year to ride his first Grand Tour and score a top 3 stage result, Stage 14 of La Vuelta.

In 2022 Vine returned to La Vuelta, clearly hungry for a higher step. And sure enough the boy from Canberra delivered – he won two of the toughest mountain stages of the race, six and eight.

LEFT: Simon Yates wins Stage 5 of the 2023 TDU as Vine secures the overall victory.

TOP: Vine in the pain cave for the E-Sports world title.

ABOVE: Jay with wife Bre.

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BELOW: Vine crashed heavily during his first Grand Tour, the '21 Vuelta, but got back up, caught the peloton, and finished third on the stage.

RIGHT: Winning his first major event, the 2023 Santos Tour Down Under.

To the present day with 'superteam' UAE Emirates, Grand Tour selection is way more an absolute certainty than wishful thinking. Announcing he is focusing upon the '23 Giro d'Italia, he hinted his best form was yet to come.

"To be able to have my first overall GC, my first race with my new team in my home country … it's indescribable," he said.

"The last guy to win this was Richie Porte," Vine continued. "He was an idol of mine, and to be standing here two years after he was here is pretty special. I'll remember this forever."

"This is just the start of my build for the year," he said after the final stage. "We will see what happens in the next few races."

JAY'S TOP TEAM

Jay's wife Bre is not only his closest confidante but a critical part of his success. An accomplished rider in her own right, Bre also represented Australia at the 2022 E-Sports World Championships.

We spoke extensively with Bre during Tour Down Under week and she explained how the couple work together.

"We have talked the stages through and he always has a good plan," she said.

Sitting on the top tube of her bike – a Colnago V4Rs – Bre told us she'd been busy riding Adelaide and "doing lots of course recons".

"Stage 3 and 5 have been the two rides I've been doing more consistently," she explained.

"Mainly to get a vibe of each course so we can later talk about it later. I pass on details about points we think he can go for it."

And of course, stages 3 and 5 were where the race was won, Jay making his pivotal move on the Corkscrew, and then maintaining his lead over nearest rival Simon Yates on Mt Lofty.

On the TDU win and season ahead, she said despite all the attention Jay was keeping a level head.

"Racing the biggest cycling names is daunting, but you can't have that overwhelm you," she told us.

"Our mindset has been 'this is a really promising start to the season and we should be excited for the future racing ahead.'

"We've taken some pressure off Jay, now he has two major results on the board, but in the same breath that has set the expectations quite high. So it's a rather unique balancing act. I think this has given us confidence moving forward, and has helped set the tone for the coming seasons with UAE." BA

"…stages 3 and 5 were where the race was won, JAY MAKING HIS PIVOTAL MOVE ON THE CORKSCREW…"

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Magnificent MUDGEE

LONG-TIME BICYCLING AUSTRALIA JOURNALIST PETER MANIATY TAKES US ON A RIDE BACK IN TIME, THROUGH MUDGEE AND THE NSW MID WEST.

I FINISHED!
MUDGEE
#MUDGEECLASSIC
SUNDAY, 2 MAY 2021

BACK IN THE AUTUMN OF 2021, I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE AN AMBASSADOR FOR THE inaugural Mudgee Classic. Whilst I'd been reasonably close to the area before, having ridden several times around places like Bathurst, Orange, Hill End and Dubbo over the years, it was my first time based in Mudgee itself. I absolutely loved my four-day stay and have since returned on two more occasions with bikes and friends in tow.

Yes, the riding in and around Mudgee is brilliant. But what really stuck with me on that first visit was the complete experience that comes with it. The food and the wine. The scenery. The history. The friendly and relaxed locals.

There are some places where you just tend to feel more welcome – and Mudgee is one of them. Nestled in Wiradjuri country along the Cudgegong River, it's a truly fabulous part of regional Australia, brilliantly geared for cyclo-tourism. Not too big, but big enough. Not too far from Sydney, but far enough to feel a million miles away.

If you're considering making the trip out to the third annual Mudgee Classic on the weekend of 29/30 April 2023, I'd simply say: "What are you waiting for?" Grab your mates. Register your spots. Book your accommodation. You won't regret it!

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Event Ambassador Karen Norris rides a section of the Mudgee Classic road course prior to bunnyhopping the bitumen to try out the region's gravel.

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BELOW: Downtown Mudgee will morph into cycling central on Sunday April 30 for the annual Mudgee Classic Gran Fondo.

OPPOSITE: Riders, family and friends enjoying a lazy afternoon at the Event Village. Karen Norris riding a section of the Dirty Mudgee gravel course. And 2021 Mudgee Classic riders stop to check out a passing hot air balloon.

THE RIDING

Regional Australia is renowned for 'dead' roads and the Central West of NSW is no exception. If you're planning a long day in the saddle, be prepared for tired legs and, at times, inconsistent road surfaces; also stay alert for potential damage from the record rainfall and flooding seen over the past 12 months or so. 28mm+ tyres and/or lower pressures are the order of the day, as well as plenty of spares.

The riding terrain around Mudgee isn't especially flat, but nor is it brutally hilly. Sure, it has its moments. But overall, I'd describe it as 'rolling'.

On my visits I've also experienced relatively little traffic and those vehicles I have come across have been generally accommodating, providing plenty of space. Don't forget to gaze upwards from time to time either, especially if you're riding in the serenity of the early morning. You might see a hot air balloon or two floating gently above some of the many vineyards.

Of course, if the dirt is more your style, the Mudgee region also boasts some of NSW's most outstanding gravel riding – around 55km of which will feature in the inaugural Dirty Mudgee gravel event on Saturday 29 April.

The town itself actually sits at the south-eastern tip of the popular Central West Cycle Trail, a 400km(ish) loop which passes through Gulgong, Dunedoo and Mendooran to the north and Wellington, Geurie and Dubbo to the west.

THE WEATHER

Mudgee can get stinking hot in summer. But in the autumn months riders can expect crisp mornings, often with some fog or mist, which slowly give way to reasonably mild days.

In April, temperatures average between 9 degrees (low) and 23 (high) degrees, while the month typically sees just 3 days of wet weather.

My time at the Mudgee Classic in 2021 was defined by clear blue skies stretching as far as the eye could see and very pleasant riding conditions. Just glorious.

THE REGION

An established wine producing region that's well used to welcoming tourists, Mudgee is 260km north-west of Sydney, roughly a 3hr 30min drive. Basically, you turn right when you see the power stations just past Lithgow, then follow the Castlereagh Highway all the way to Mudgee.

The vibrant wine, food and artisanal produce scene – including bustling pubs, first-class restaurants, cellar doors and numerous options for fresh coffee and pastries – is accompanied by super friendly locals and there's certainly no shortage of things to see and do, making it well worth allowing a few extra days before and/or after your weekend's riding. Rest assured, non-cycling partners and family will have plenty to keep them occupied while you're out on the road. (Oh, there are also a couple of bike shops in town should you require last-minute spares or supplies.)

MUDGEE CLASSIC
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THE EVENT

I've always loved regional fondos and the Mudgee Classic is right up there with my favourites. There's just a wonderfully authentic camaraderie amongst the riders and locals that you don't get in the city.

As mentioned, Saturday April 29 will see the first-ever Dirty Mudgee Gravel Fondo held over a scenic 55km loop taking in the rural lanes, trails, wineries and grazing lands to the north of Mudgee. The following day it's the turn of the roadies – although many visitors will no doubt take the opportunity to back up and 'do the double'.

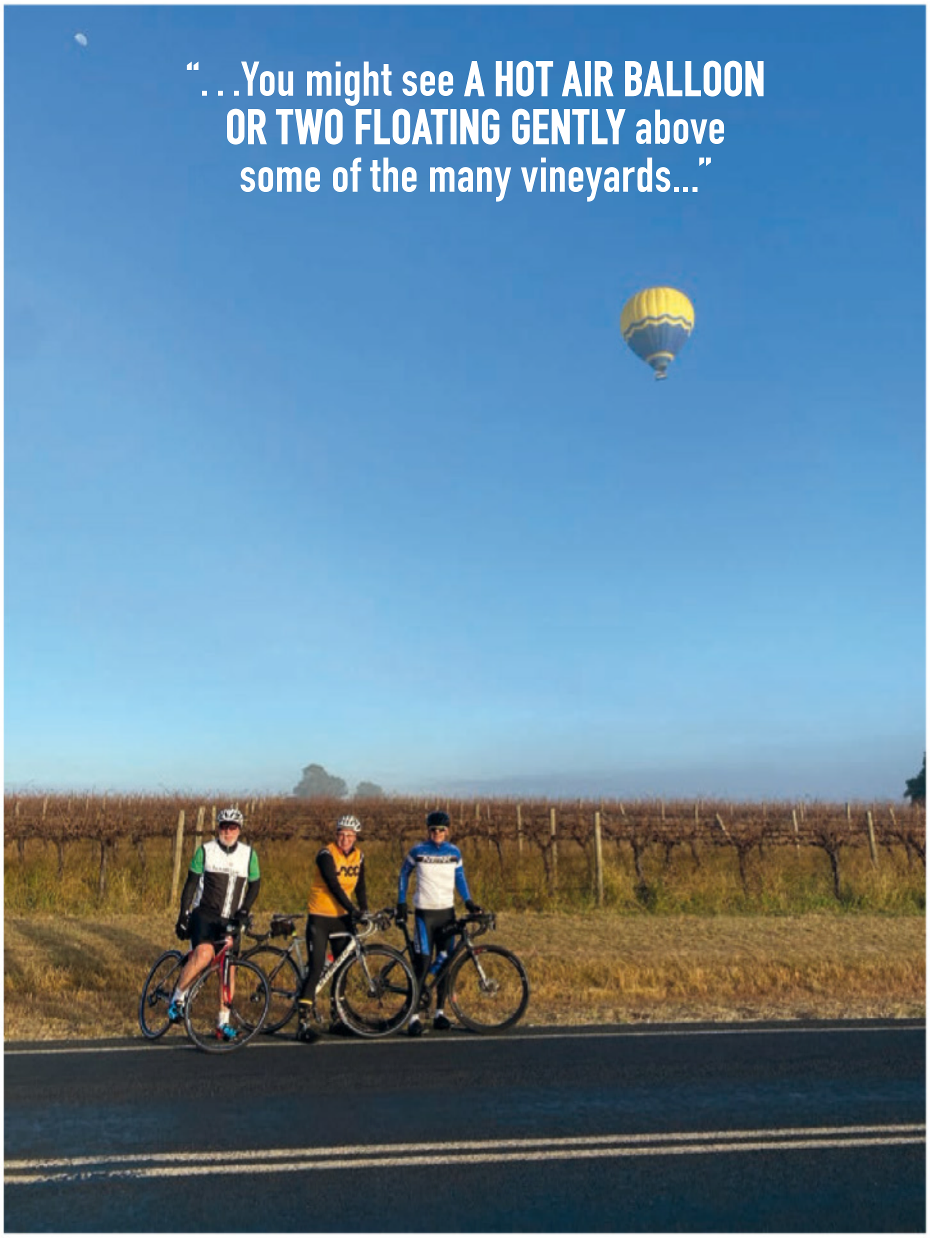
On Sunday April 30 an estimated 2,000 riders will roll under the starting gantry on Church Street in Mudgee, tackling their choice of four magnificent courses ranging from relatively-leisurely 35km (377m climbing) and 65km (573m) options, to far sterner tests over 125km (1,069m) and 175km (1,470m).

The two longest rides stretch all the way out to the northern townships of Ulan and Gulgong. But while the shorter routes will have you back in town much sooner, they still take in some spectacular local scenery.

I rode the 35km Social Classic course back in 2021 as a Saturday warm up, and it's a wonderful little ride, winding its way up towards St Fillans before you hurtle back home along Henry Lawson Drive. Whichever route you choose, your day's work will end back at the event village in the Glen Willow Regional Sports Complex with cold beer, tasty food, live music and possibly the word's comfiest bean bags.

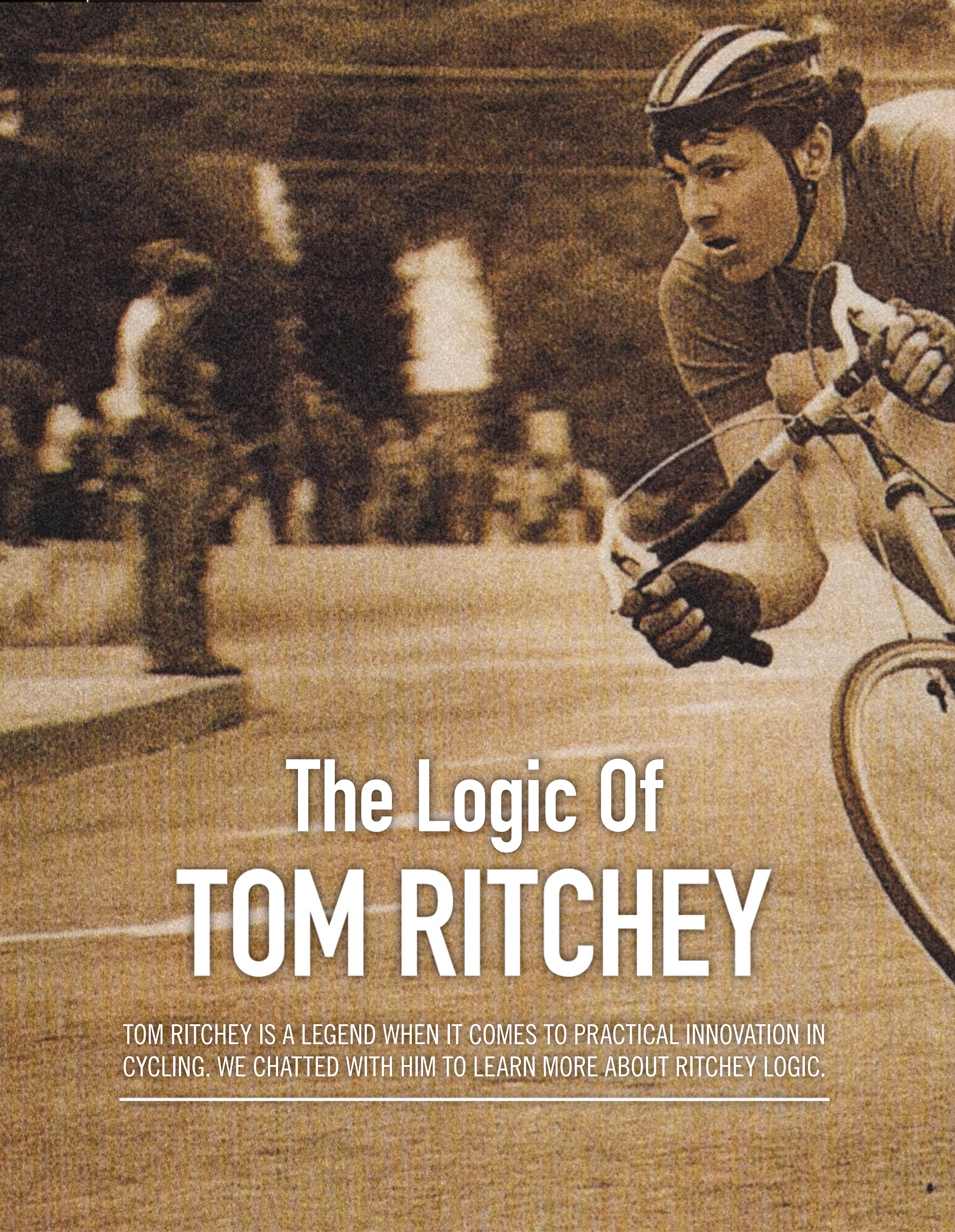
The 2023 Mudgee Classic takes place on April 29/30.

For further details or to register for the 2023 Mudgee Classic visit www.mudgeeclassic.com.au BA



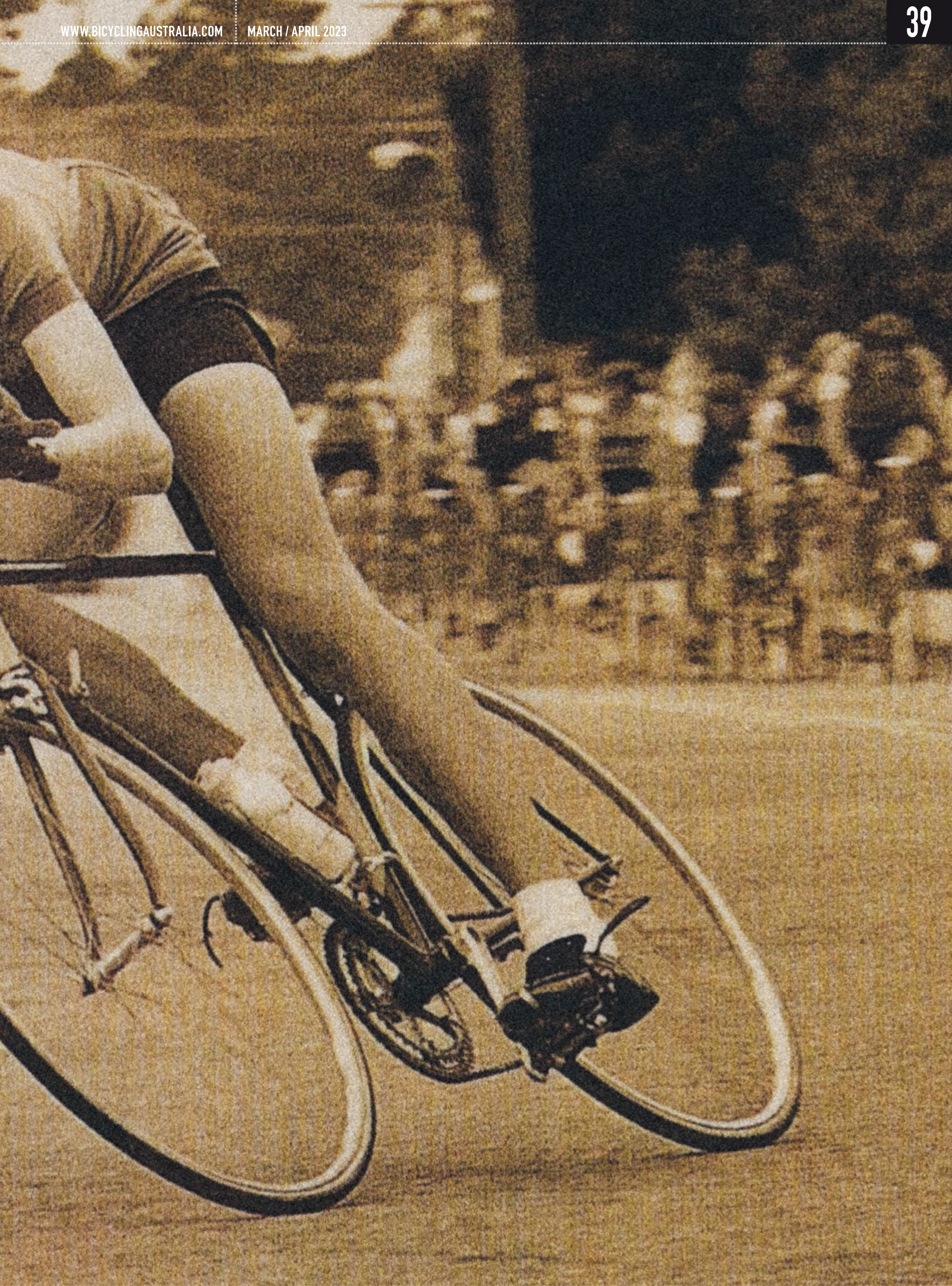
> "…You might see **A HOT AIR BALLOON OR TWO FLOATING GENTLY** above some of the many vineyards…"

WORDS & IMAGES: STEVE THOMAS



The Logic Of
TOM RITCHEY

TOM RITCHEY IS A LEGEND WHEN IT COMES TO PRACTICAL INNOVATION IN CYCLING. WE CHATTED WITH HIM TO LEARN MORE ABOUT RITCHEY LOGIC.



IF YOU'VE BEEN RIDING BIKES FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME the chances are that you have used Ritchey products. From frames to just about every part on a bike has been made by the California based company started and owned by Tom Ritchey.

Many associate Ritchey with mountain biking, and yet that's just a part of the story. Tom was a classy national team road rider as a junior, and since his mid teens he's been making bikes and parts for all kinds of riders.

Tom is fully hands on with his business, which has been Ritchey owned since day one – an anomaly in the bike industry. He has put in his own design work to the products from the get go, and has stuck successfully to his guns on theory and development.

We talked with him about his career.

WHAT INITIALLY MADE YOU GO LUGLESS AND OVERSIZED WITH YOUR FRAMES?

You couldn't build a tandem unless you wanted to go lugless, and I built my first tandem in 1974. They all had to be lugless, and oversized. The bottom bracket on a tandem is 50/52mm, and I had to machine and create new jigging things in order to be able to build them.

A tandem is a very unique structure because of its length and laterals and the strength you have to build in to it. It's one thing for a single to fail, but a tandem going 60mph is another thing – you don't last long as an engineer and builder (if one does fail). You need a very special skillset to execute a tandem build, or a strong bike for Eric Heiden, a tall bike for a 7.3-inch basketball player or a micro bike.

I built multiple unique bikes for athletes who had no choice but a custom bike. You couldn't build these bikes without going lugless; you couldn't buy lugs for this.

Early in my career I wanted to go down that road, and back then I also built lugged, up until the mountain bike came around. That was when I gave up on lugs – there was no interest or value in them.

Another reason was that the Italians were coming on strong. They'd figured out how to go to a gun factory in Verona and use their technology (microfusione Italiano) and get them to investment cast lugs that were amazing in terms of their intricacy, their perfect lines and duplicable quality.

They turned on this completely new facet in the cycling world. You had Gios Torino and Colnago never having to file a lug again because of this technology.

I was in Verona while this was happening, and I didn't want to be a part of it, because they were taking all of the old designed bikes, which I'd (in my mind) already evolved, and they were taking this lug making technique and taking all of the craft out of it.

There was no filing, no finishing, it was just a manufacturing process that streamlined everything, to the point where anyone could build a good looking bike, and no one seems to know that story.

BELOW: Ritchey products – from simple singular components through to entire bikes – have developed a solid global reputation over the past four decades.

LOGIC
RITCHEY

"...I'm a small company, and all of a sudden I had **SOME OF THE BIGGEST CUSTOMERS IN THE WORLD...**"

THIS PAGE: After more than four decades of manufacturing road, gravel and MTB components, frames, parts, accessories and even apparel, the name Ritchey is synonymous with the sport.

RITCHEY
RITCHEY

HOW DID THE SHIFT TO ONE SIZE FITS ALL APPROACH IN THE BIKE INDUSTRY IMPACT YOU?
Custom fit and build is incredibly important. You have a whole generation of racers who don't know what it's like to ride something that's made for them.

The whole pro team side of things; I look at it and think it's not a good thing. But, I was in the right place at the right time because I was going into components.

Everyone else I knew was going as fast as they could away from custom building, and they had to have (fit) solutions, and I had solutions. You have five geometries to choose from, and a guy who's 6'3" isn't going to fit on them.

The only way he's going to fit is if Ritchey comes up with a 140mm stem, and so I went into all kinds of stem and seatpost development with different variables and adjustment options, and with quality production. All of a sudden this was a solution to the problems of one-size fits all in the racing side.

The whole pro side of the sport screwed everything up so bad in the '90s, because they were just accepting money and sponsorship without any thoughts to the riders. Hand over foot it was "give me the money and I'll figure out fitting the rider later."

Ritchey came to dominance in the road and mountain component side very quickly, because I knew how to drive this ship and no one else knew how to. I'm a small company from a design and manufacturing perspective, and all of a sudden I had some of the biggest customers in the world needing me to solve their problems, because they wanted to build that one size fits all world.

AS A FRAME BUILDER HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS SHIFT?
I was always vocal about what I thought was going on, and said that it didn't make sense. I wasn't just keeping quiet and taking the money.

But, if people were going to do this then I was going to make the best stem possible. If they were going to make 35mm diameter seatposts that were 500mm long and stick them on sloping top tube bikes with carbon this and that I was going to be the one saying this doesn't make any sense and that you were going to bone-shake the rider to bits, and was always advocating for a better fit.

But the marketing and sales guys were in charge of the industry, and so it didn't matter. They heard what I was saying very loudly, but they were going to do what they were going to do.

I was designing the best stems and seatposts in the world to make them fit, for the people I was sponsoring. With Gerolesteiner and many other teams I was their number one tool in what they needed to make their bikes work.

That helped my growth all over the world. If you have a high level team and they're in the Tour de France, and you can see the branding on a product (which we were good at doing), and you're a customer and want to also but that bike and it didn't fit you then you'd go with what the pro's were using – and they were using Ritchey products.

A lot of companies weren't getting into this well. They didn't know what they were doing design wise, they were heavy or breaking. There were a lot of things that failed in that period of time, when people were figuring out how to make a responsible product.

If you had a reputation for making a responsible product that didn't fail, and even if you were not sponsored by Ritchey you would buy it.

HOW MUCH DO COMPONENTS COMPENSATE IN THE FIT AND COMFORT PROCESS VERSUS A CUSTOM FRAME?

If you're within that median of 5'6" to 6' tall you're probably going to be okay. But, if you're short legged or have a long torso (which you see in a lot of people), then you're going to be in a position where certain things are going to be more challenging.

Whether it's sprinting, descending, or if you're a pro team in a big challenging race, where you have to be comfortable in a position for a long period of time – then you're going to be more vulnerable in terms of your position on a bike – be that safe or efficient.

There's a whole generation who don't know what they don't know; they've grown up with never being fitted, and then they're going to think that's the bike industry, but it's not.

Regardless of material, the wonderful thing about gravel is that's almost like a reset button. It's teaching people how to ride a bike again, in a way that they can now feel what it's like in a reconstituted (not pure) way what the industry was like when I started to make bikes, and that's a good thing.

WHAT ARE YOUR FRAME AND COMPONENT MATERIAL THOUGHTS FOR ROAD AND GRAVEL?

There is no bad material any more. Aluminium is a great product – if it's a solid and forged product, and it works exceptionally well as cranks, seatposts and stems.

I made a lot of steel heat treated quill stems, while the rest of the industry was going with aluminium, and I got a lot of red flags, and many companies doing the same went out of business, because they didn't know what they were doing.

When the 3D technology came around I was the first to recognise it and that it was the salvation of welded steel and aluminium seatposts and stems that were failing. They didn't have the treatment that was going to interfere with them.

> "...people's reaction was of horror that I RODE THOSE ROAD BIKES OFFROAD..."

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ABOVE: Tom Ritchey, now aged 67, started tinkering with bikes when just 11 years old, his father helping teach him to build wheels and repair tubulars.

There's appropriate aluminium, appropriate carbon and appropriate steel.

No matter what kind of speciality carbon bike you have it will have steel bottom brackets, steel bearings, steel chains and stainless steel spokes and cables. There's a tremendous amount of steel that goes up into space, because it's the only material that's ended up being reliable.

There's a cost benefit, which has nothing to do with exotic materials; it's because a fundamental characteristic with steel is reliability, even today.

You can do a lot of wonderful things with titanium, but the bottom line is that it's going to cost 5-10 times more. It has some advantages, and will do some things better, but not everything.

You can do things with carbon fibre that people have never done before, and because of marketing it's become popular.

The whole bike industry went into meltdown when Cannondale introduced them to the big fat tubed aluminium bike. They came along as a newbie and thought they'd re-invent the bike and put a 3-inch diameter down tube on it. It was genius marketing, directly or indirectly. They steered themselves to success because they had the biggest billboard. They had the longest name and biggest billboard, when everyone else was in there with their small tubes and jockey shorts and nowhere else to put their name.

It was hilarious to watch. Within a year Specialized had to have a big aluminium bike and billboard, and every other company had to follow them. It had nothing to do with technology; it was marketing.

The problem with marketing is that companies are not going to let go of that billboard, and with carbon fibre they can have their cake and eat it too. They're not going to give up on that branding in a world that's gone cuckoo with branding.

The issue with that is when you stick to your sales and marketing point of view it means big, and big equals stiff. That's what Cannondale showed us: big equals stiff but it doesn't equal comfort.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR PERSONAL CHOICE FOR FRAME MATERIAL?

A high quality steel build is still the best, the most comfortable to ride. It's not the lightest, but it can have most of the characteristics of a light bike today.

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF RECENT RESEARCH, AND THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT COMFORT IS MOSTLY DOWN TO TYRES?

A lot of this is down to environment. If you live in Switzerland and have perfect roads there's not a lot of problems with stiffness in a bike.

In the '80s and '90s in the US we wanted 25 and 27mm tyres, and I was always surprised that the Germans and Swiss were fine with 19 and 20c tyres, and until I went and rode their roads it didn't make sense to me.

I've always liked to mix it up with dirt and gravel, and people's reaction was of horror that I rode those (road) bikes offroad; thankfully that's changed now and there are so many choices. There was just one flavour of ice cream when I started, and now there are so many ways of tuning your ride.

There's still so much more that's marketing baloney, and people don't know. If you read it and write from an engineering perspective, like I do – how many people are going to care? Still not that many.

DO YOU STILL BUILD FRAMES AND PARTS?

I'm constantly building. I built a couple of forks the other day and I built an L'Eroica bike last year. My shop is alive and well, and I usually go and work on my bikes and new things that are in the prototype stage. It's still something that I do; it's still who I am. BA

ALLEZ
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WORDS & IMAGES: PETER MANIATY

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MANO A MANO
Pete's Strava Battle

LONG-TIME BICYCLING AUSTRALIA JOURNALIST PETER MANIATY RECENTLY BECAME INVOLVED IN A SEGMENT TUSSLE ON STRAVA.

THINGS BEGAN INNOCENTLY ENOUGH. AT THE END of a leisurely ride over the Christmas break of 2017, I decided to include a quick lap of the inauspicious suburban street that surrounds my parents' home in Brisbane's western suburbs. For purely nostalgic purposes, I then made it a Strava segment and, given no-one else had ever ridden the same anonymous 760-metre loop with a whopping five metres of elevation, I instantly became KOM holder.

For the next four or so years, nothing changed. In fact, there was so little activity on the segment I forgot it even existed. Until April 2022, that is. One morning back home in Sydney, I received the tell-tale notification from Strava. "Uh oh! You just lost your KOM." Really? I had a quick check and it was the loop surrounding Mum and Dad's place. I had a chuckle. I wasn't annoyed, but I certainly was a bit surprised, largely that anybody even cared enough to take such a nondescript KOM from me. Maybe they didn't care? Maybe it was purely accidental? Oh well, whatever the reason, given I was living 950km away there wasn't much I could do about it and I quickly forgot about it again.

Fast forward seven months, however, and I found myself laughing with a few mates about the phenomenon of Strava segment hunters and recounted the tale of my lost KOM. I mentioned I would soon be heading back to my family home in Brisbane for Christmas 2022 and everyone joked that I should try and reclaim it. I always take my bike anyway, and the new time was only a few seconds faster than the original (casually ridden) record, so I was pretty confident I could get it back. I assumed the holder was probably long gone anyway and no-one would even notice. How wrong I was!

I arrived in Brisbane a few days before Christmas. On the first morning, I set out for a traditional 'River Loop', but first I rode a few laps of the segment around Mum and Dad's place.It was 4:45am, not another human in sight, and my Garmin told me I'd successfully lowered the mark by two seconds. I smiled. For the next few hours, I rode triumphantly around Tennyson, West End and St Lucia, satisfied in the knowledge that order had been restored, not to mention a bit of family honour. However, within barely an hour of completing the ride, I received a notification on Strava. "Uh oh! You just lost your KOM."

"No way!" I thought to myself. Far from no-one caring, it became clear there was someone who cared about this little segment very much. Closer inspection showed the previous KOM holder, who obviously lived nearby, had lowered my new time by a full four seconds. I told my family the somewhat unexpected news and they all had a laugh. But I cannot lie. I was a bit pissed off. My teenage son then piped up, "Well, you better get back out there Dad and take it back!" He was right. Game on.

Within a matter of minutes, a segment I'd barely thought about for years started to

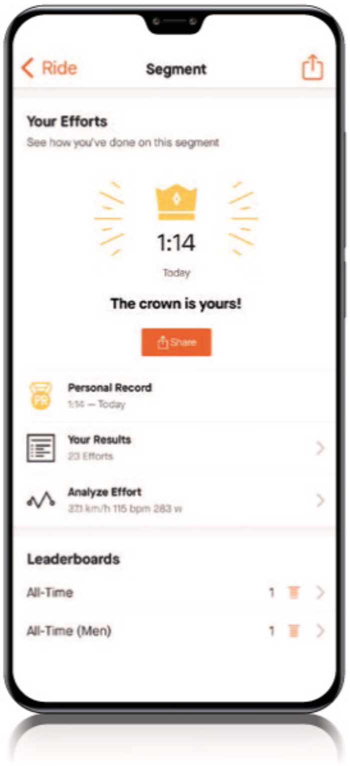
BELOW: Pete Maniaty collated a collage of images taken after his latest attempt at the contentious Strava segment.

RIGHT: The proof is in the pudding, on in this case on the app that ends all apps. Pete's hard-fought outer Brisbane KOM on Strava.

consume me. Wars have started over less. I considered my next move, and the following morning I set out to correct things. I rolled out early once again, this time enroute to the iconic Brisbane climb, Mt Coot-tha. I did a quick local warm up, then laid down a new PB for the prized segment. I actually thought I'd broken the KOM by two seconds. My Garmin suggested as much at the time. However, Strava had different ideas. According to them, I'd recorded the exact same time. It was a tie. Oh, the drama.

What now? Would my newly-discovered nemesis set out to reclaim it immediately once more? He certainly had a big advantage in the sense that, as a local, he could ride endless 760-metre laps until the record duly fell, whereas I'd soon be returning to Sydney. Given the circumstances, my strategy was simply to wait and watch. The suspense was very real. Yet nothing happened for the next four days of my stay. On reflection, I figured this was likely my best chance to keep the KOM, as a joint holder. No shame in that.

Then, with just 24 hours until our departure, my family started to agitate things. In particular, my usually mild-mannered partner suggested I stop mucking about. I should get out and "smash" the time on my final day in Brisbane, or I'd regret it all year. My impressionable son whole heartedly agreed and so did my parents. I wasn't entirely convinced. But peer pressure is a powerful force. I caved. I couldn't back down now. Family honour was once more on the line.



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1:14

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1:14 — Today

Your Results

23 Efforts

Analyze Effort

37.1 km/h 115 bpm 283 w

Leaderboards

All-Time 1

All-Time (Men) 1

My final morning in Brisbane duly arrived. The last chance. Off I went for a short, sharp burst around the local streets. The plan was to bury myself and lower the record by so much the other guy might simply give up. Initially it seemed like I'd done just that, too. I rode four pretty brutal flying laps, back-to-back, and my Garmin told me I'd set not one, but two new PBs including a cracking fastest time that shaved a full six seconds faster than the previous record! I was stoked. However, my joy turned to disbelief about 30 minutes later, as upon uploading the ride to Strava, it once again told me I had ridden somewhat slower than my Garmin initially suggested. According to the Strava leaderboard – the only one that matters – I was actually still a second behind the official KOM. It was a scarcely believable seven-second discrepancy and wasn't even my fastest time. WTF?!

I stewed for 30 minutes or so, cursing the vagaries of GPS technology. Then I did a bit of research on a few Strava help forums which suggested it might be worth deleting and reloading the ride file. I'm so glad I did. I have no idea what had happened, but it seemed to be some kind of data glitch. On reloading the file, Strava had suddenly changed its mind. I'd done the segment in 1:14. Oddly, it was still four seconds slower than my Garmin time, but regardless it meant I would leave Brisbane as the KOM holder after all. You little beauty.

How long will the new record last? That's anyone's guess. In fact, there's every chance by the time you read this it's already gone. Fortunately, I'll be back in Brisbane again next Christmas… BA

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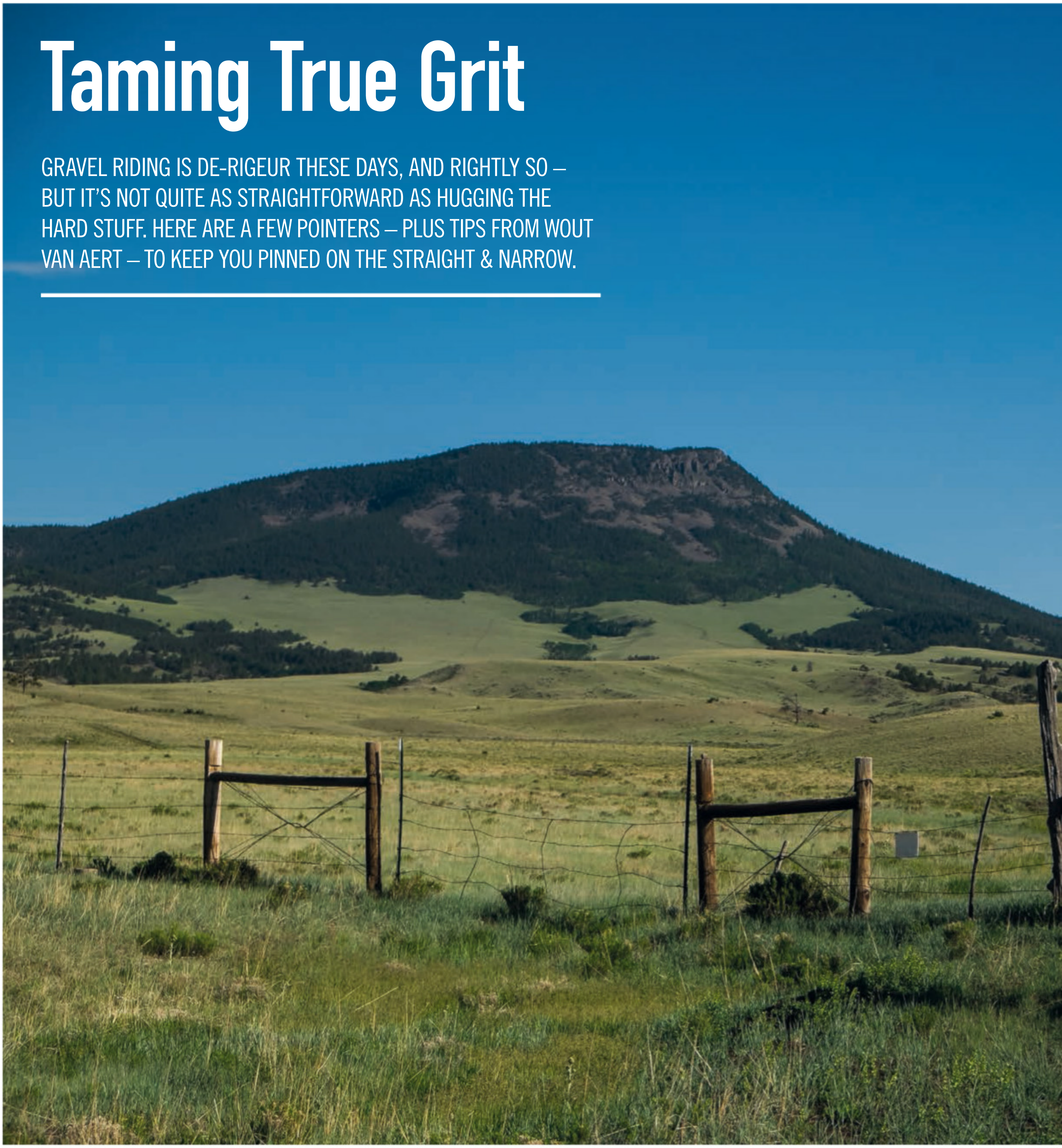
Mastering Gravel

WORDS & IMAGES: STEVE THOMAS

Taming True Grit

GRAVEL RIDING IS DE-RIGEUR THESE DAYS, AND RIGHTLY SO – BUT IT'S NOT QUITE AS STRAIGHTFORWARD AS HUGGING THE HARD STUFF. HERE ARE A FEW POINTERS – PLUS TIPS FROM WOUT VAN AERT – TO KEEP YOU PINNED ON THE STRAIGHT & NARROW.



Wide open spaces and a dream gravel destination, but planning, knowledge and self-reliance are critical aspects of adventure riding.

ALTHOUGH MOST OF US HAVE been riding bikes offroad since we were knee-high to a grasshopper, there's no doubting that things have become a lot more sophisticated since those knee scathing days of bodged scrapheap bikes and planked ramps.

Gravel riding, as it has come to be known, may well have been seen by some as a way for the bike industry to simply sell you a new bike, and to an extent that is true. However, those who do dip their rubber into the dirty world of curly bars and skinny rubber riding offroad will soon tell you that gravel is so much more than a marketing ploy – arguably, it is the future for many of us, not only in a practical and fun way, but also from a safety point.

For those new to gravel, or those still sitting on that jaded fence of decision, here are a few basics to help keep you grinning and rubber side up when the going gets fast and loose, ohh, and with a few dirty secrets thrown into the mix from non-other than Mr Wout van Aert.

DO YOU REALLY NEED A GRAVEL BIKE?

There's a big difference between want and need – but unless you're all fixed on road racing and sportives then a gravel bike is quite probably the most versatile allrounder ride there is, and for those who do not partake in chasing grams and split seconds then it is possibly the only bike you will ever need.

Gravel bikes have come on in leaps and bounds in the past 3-4 years, and there is no industry standard. They have evolved from simply being guesswork adapted touring and cyclo cross bikes to precision offroad speed machines, and with almost as many variations as a mountainbike offers.

For smooth and dry stuff, lighter riders can get away with a road bike and fatter tyres, as we saw at the UCI Gravel Worlds (ahem), but for more serious stuff you will want something a tad beefier and more robust, and with gearing to suit. Sure, you can lockout the suspension and adapt an old mountainbike, but it does come up short when compared to a modern gravel bike – so, if you can afford it a dedicated gravel bike is a noble and worthwhile investment.

IT'S A SET UP

You will probably not want to shift too far away from your regular road position, but if you are taking on regular rough rides (especially if they are technically demanding) you should try riding around 1-1.5cm shorter and marginally higher at the front end.

This will ease back, arm, and neck fatigue and also help to stabilise the ride and allow you a more loose front end grip, which helps with control and visibility.

ROLLING STOCK

Your choice of wheels, and even more so tyres, is almost as important as the actual bike, although these can of course be easily changed as and when and at a reasonable price.

It's great that manufacturers and research have finally woken up to the theory that wider wheels and tyres are not a hindrance, and that is even more so when it comes to gravel and rough riding.

Slightly wider rims and more spokes will give a softer ride with considerably less chance of impact punctures. Deep alloy road rims may look and feel nice, but they also make for a very rigid ride, which is more prone to impact punctures, and induces rider fatigue – especially if you're a bigger rider.

Tyre choice can change your whole ride; and not all tyres and manufacturers are even. Depending on the terrain, 28-46mm tyres are best. If it's dry and not so rough 30-36mm tyres are great for every day road and light gravel use. More chunky 36-46mm tyres are super grippy and comfortable offroad, and they rarely puncture. If run hard off the road they also roll smoothly. It's also well worth considering going tubeless for gravel riding, unless you frequently switch between tyres that is, as sealant can be a messy affair.

As long as you're at ease with your bike handling skills you can usually afford to have a lighter tread pattern on the front tyre; it makes for a more precise feel, and helps you to roll faster on hard pack. Be aware that the knobbier the tyre is the faster it wears on the road – especially the rear, so after a while switch the rear tyre to the front to increase longevity.

> **"...Play with your tyre pressure and feel the small differences. I THINK PEOPLE OFTEN RIDE THEIR TYRES TOO HARD, especially on gravel..."**

As for tyre pressures, that varies depending on the tyre, your weight and the terrain. Fatter gravel tyres (especially tubeless) allow you to run lower pressures (25-40psi being the regular range), which makes for more comfort and grip, but this can be sluggish if you do a lot of road/hard pack riding.

In the wet it pays to soften things up some to keep traction, but do not go too low as impact punctures will become a potential issue.

THE RIGHT GEAR

Even ultra-smooth gravel will slow you down by around at least 10-20%. The rougher it gets the slower you will go – and consequently the lower the gears you will need. Although many of us old timers may still feel confined by the bravado of bigger gears, it really has been proven to be a fallacy – keep your gears down, and always have at least one lower gear than you think you will need. Pushing a bike up a loose and steep gravel climb is not much fun.

Compact 34/50 cranks with 28 or 32 tooth rear sprockets are the regular offering on mid-range gravel bikes, which is very limiting if you want to hit some serious offroad trails.

The latest 1x systems are clean and simple but can be restricting if you also do road rides on the same bike.

After much trial and error I managed to convert my double chainring ride to a 40-tooth bottom rear sprocket, which allows me to tackle some more serious offroad climbs, while also retaining a fine selection of fast moving gears for road work. Even so, for real offroad goodness and ageing legs it's not quite low enough for me.

The secret ingredient here was a small adaptor called a Wolf Tooth Road Link; it was $40 or so well spent. Be sure to check compatibility before attempting a conversion, it can prove frustrating if your cogs don't align.

CLIMBING

Climbing on dirt is much heavier and slower going than on the road, and grades can suddenly ramp up, and so keeping in a low gear is essential. Always look ahead, especially at switchbacks.

The lines you take will not be as ideal as they might be on the road, as you need to look for a smooth and grit free ride, which is often in vehicle tracks.

Stay in saddle and keep it light on the bars as much as you can. When you do stand up do it gently and avoid rapid acceleration. Keep your cadence smooth, and your weight over the saddle and back of the bike until you sense the balance of traction versus gradient and move accordingly to keep your wheels pinned to the ground.

DESCENDING

Be sure to know how your tyres, your bike and the brakes react – and how far you can push them. Look well ahead, and also constantly scan the ground 20-50 metres in front – if you hit a hole or rock at speed it will hurt.

Gravel fan Karen Norris stops to enjoy the stunning scenery during a recent country ride.

WOUT VAN AERT DISHES HIS DIRTY SECRETS

FOR A RACE LIKE STRADE BIANCHI OR PARIS-ROUBAIX WHAT TYRES DO YOU USE, AND WHO MAKES THOSE CHOICES?

We have a tyre sponsor – Vittoria, and luckily they have some good tyres, which is not a commercial thing, it's true. We can choose what we want from the range, so choice is personal. I don't think it's best to leave this choice to the mechanics, but of course it's good to have advice.

With my cyclo cross experience I feel the difference more between the tyres – or that's how it seems when talking to teammates.

Strade Bianchi and Paris-Roubaix are very different. In Strade Bianchi you have a lot of gravel, but also a lot of steep uphill on asphalt, so you don't want too much resistance, and so I usually ride 28mm there, and I don't like a heavy profile.

For Roubaix you want tyres that can survive the roughness and also stay on the cobbles, and so there I ride 30mm and with more profile – more tough.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR GRAVEL RIDING?

Tyres are really important. Play with your tyre pressure and feel the small differences. I think people often ride their tyres too hard, especially on gravel.

The preparation for racing or riding gravel is more important than on the road; the best thing is always to practice. There are also lots of corners, which are quite technical at speed. During endurance training use your gravel bike and not a road bike, and get offroad to get used to it.

Scrub your speed off gently and evenly between any corners, and allow at least double the braking distance that you would on the road, and do not brake in a corner.

Unless the road is very smooth, then stand or push off the saddle using the the pedals and keep your weight back slightly, with your arms and legs slightly bent to absorb the bumps and to allow the bike to bounce around some. Always keep a firm grip of the bars, while also allowing them to move around – almost as if they were a lightly greased pole.

Keep your distance from other riders, and don't automatically follow their lines. If it's dusty ahead ease off and allow for it to clear some. Try and stay relaxed physically and yet very alert mentally, but don't be too nervous.

Quality gravel riding can be found in close proximity to some of our biggest cities! Here Julie-Ann Hazlett rides the Great North Road near Sydney.

GRAVEL ROAD
NEXT 17 km

If it's not too steep and brakes are not crucial then riding on the tops or hoods will give a better lookout and also make for a more stable and comfortable ride, but you will lose some braking power.

CORNERING

Racing lines are rarely an option on dirt and gravel, as vehicles, weather and erosion take away their feasibility. You should always look for the safest and smoothest option.

Look well ahead, especially at what lies on the other side of the corner, and then kill your speed very evenly with both brakes.

The edge and centre of any offroad bend is rarely a safe option. Avoid cutting centre ridges in an approach to a corner, and unless you know the line well stick to the well-worn rails and play it safe.

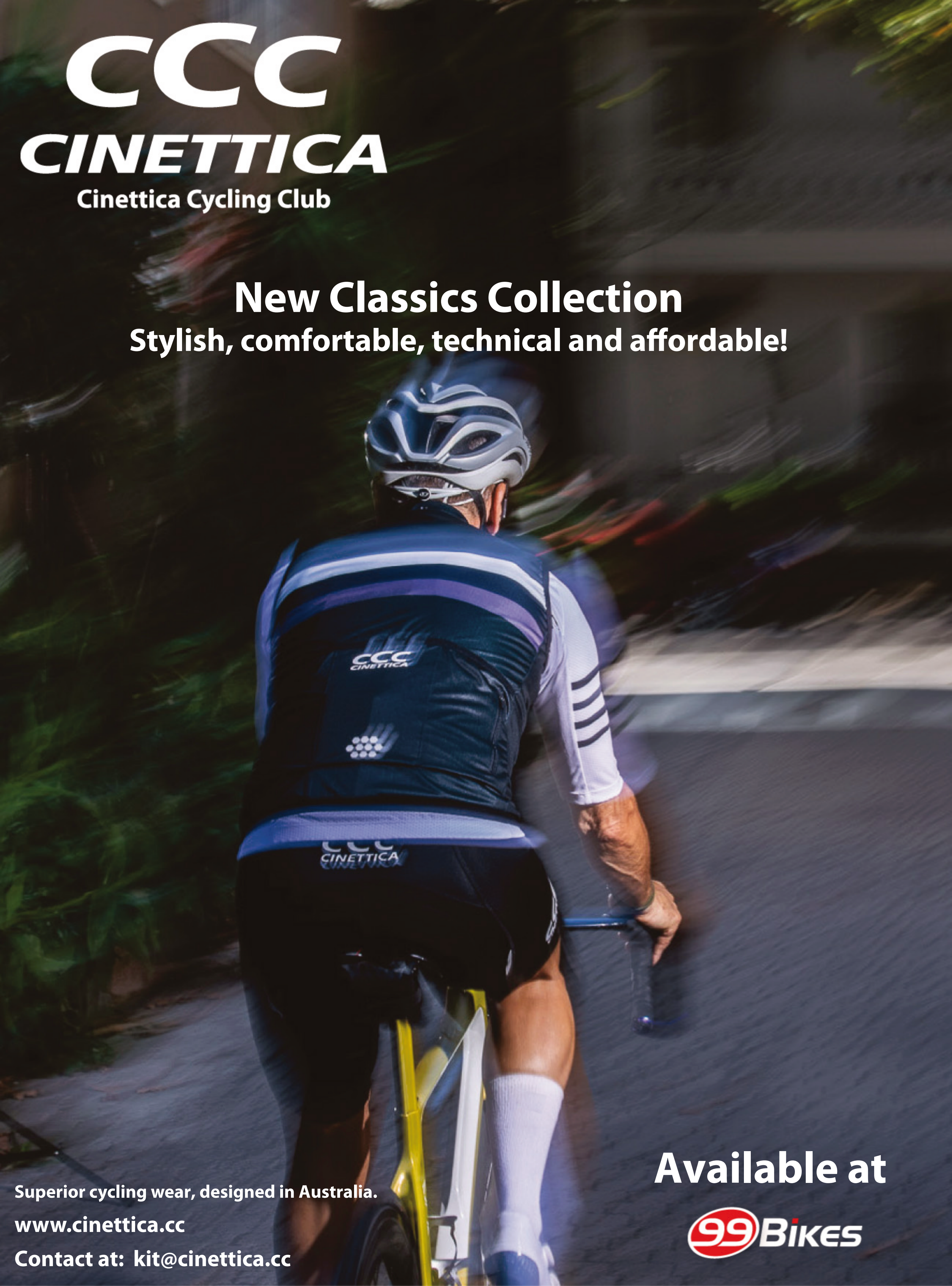
Look out for the gritty and off-camber edges and avoid them. If you do hit them by mistake then be sure to not lock the brakes, it's better to maintain as much tyre grip as you can.

LEADING LINES

On gravel safety outweighs drafting benefit by a fair few lengths. Being on the front gives you prime position when the going is slow and technical, but naturally when it's open you will want to take shelter and share the load; however, there are a few things you need to take into account.

If you're tucked in behind a rider with your head down, you will not be able to see those inevitable gritty patches, holes, or even predict lines. Consequently, it will be tough to react, so do allow half a wheel of extra room for error, and always leave an overlap that allows you a reasonable view of the trail ahead. Increase that buffer zone when things get rough and tricky, or better still get pole position for the really tricky bits.

Stay aware of the dust and mud too; this can mean riding "side saddle" on the windy side when it's downhill and fast, or hanging back a length when it's super wet. BA



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WORDS & IMAGES: NICOLA RUTZOU

How Do We Stay Upright On A Bike?

IN THIS BACK-TO-BASICS SPECIAL, NICOLA RUTZOU UNCOVERS THE SCIENCE BEHIND STABILITY ON TWO WHEELS.

FOR MANY YEARS, THE university boffins who sought to discover what kept bicycles upright agreed that two forces were responsible – gyroscopic and caster (also called trail) effects. But more recent research has found that it's more complicated than that and includes other factors, including the brain.

Hugh Hunt, of the University of Cambridge, says that our brain compensates for the wobbling of the bicycle and we learn to smooth the ride.

Hunt says that gyroscopic forces are not important for the stability of a bicycle, but they help us to control the bike when riding with no hands.

The gyroscopic effect occurs because a spinning wheel wants to stay spinning about its axis, just as a spinning top stays aligned to its spin axes. If a bicycle did stay upright because of the gyroscopic effect then any novice getting on a bike could just push off and ride the bike, and wouldn't need to learn how to ride.

Hugh Hunt says that the trail effect is important to stabilise the bike. "The front wheel makes contact with the pavement at a point that lies behind where the steering axis intersects with the pavement – and the distance between these is called the trail. The trail works to stabilise a bike in much the same way as castors work on a shopping trolley."

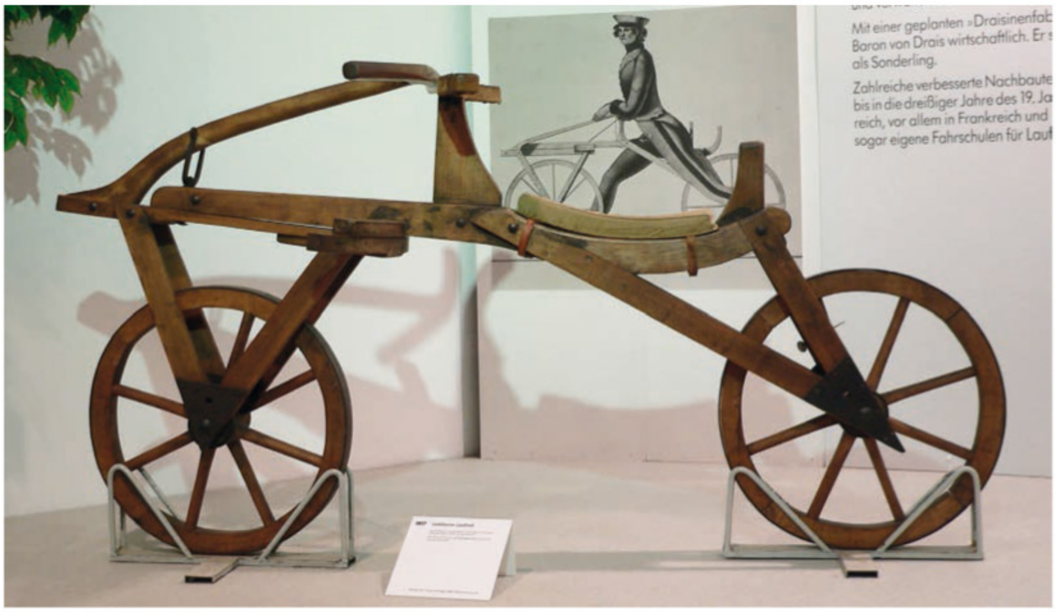
But more importantly, Hugh Hunt says that the way we stay upright on a moving bike is by actively controlling the steering.

"This is why we have to learn to ride a bike. If, as learners, we find ourselves falling over to the left then we learn to steer the bike to the left, which generates forces that tilt us back upright again, thereby putting the wheels back under our centre of gravity.

"Beginners are very wobbly, but as we become expert the corrections become smaller and we can ride in a straight line.

It’s a critical factor that we typically take for granted, stability, at speed, on two wheels, and with less than 10mm of contact with the road.

“...**TWO WELL-ACCEPTED STUDIES** from the 20th century on the self-stability of bikes **CONTAIN MISTAKES...**”


Mit einer geplanten »Draisinenfab
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Zahlreiche verbesserte Nachbaute
bis in die dreißiger Jahre des 19. Ja
reich, vor allem in Frankreich und
sogar eigene Fahrschulen für Lauf

Professor Arend Schwab, a biomechanical engineer at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, explained how today’s bikes look very similar to those designed more than 120 years ago.

The faster we ride, the smaller the steering adjustment needs to be, simply because the bike moves much further in a given time. When riding very slowly the steering adjustments required are very large. When completely at rest, active steering can do nothing for us,” said Hunt.

Another group of researchers from Cornell University, the University of Wisconsin-Stout and Delft The Netherlands, including Jim Papadopoulos, Andy Ruina and Arend Schwabhave, also established that a bike will be stable even if gyro and caster forces aren’t present. Papadopoulos believes that two well-accepted studies from the 20th century on the self-stability of bikes contain mistakes.

To prove that gyro and caster effects were not needed, the researchers built a riderless bicycle with two small wheels. Each of the wheels was matched with a counter-rotating disk to eliminate the gyro effects, and with the front wheel contact point slightly ahead of the steering axis, giving it a negative caster effect. When rolling at more than about 8 km/h per hour, the research bike still balanced itself, and if knocked slightly to one side, it straightened itself back upright.

One of the key areas highlighted by Papadopoulos and colleagues was centre of mass. This is demonstrated by fitting a long stem to a bike that is much easier to ride no-handed because the weight of the handlebars is further ahead of the front wheel.

“It’s all about how bicycle leaning automatically causes steering, which can bring the wheels back under a falling bike,” said Andy Ruina, professor of mechanics at Cornell and a co-author on the paper titled, “Bicycles can be self-stable without gyroscopic or caster effects.”

“We have found that almost any self-stable bicycle can be made unstable by misadjusting either the trail, the front-wheel gyro or the front-assembly, center-of-mass position,” the researchers explained in their paper.

“Conversely, many unstable bicycles can be made stable by appropriately adjusting any one of these three design variables.”

While their work was intended to gain insight into the nature of bicycle balance, the researchers say their analysis may lead to further improvements in bicycle design.

“If you look at the bicycles of today,” says Professor Arend Schwab, one of the report’s co-authors and a biomechanical engineer at the Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, “they look almost identical to the ones made around 1890 when scientists first looked at the self-stability of the bike.”

Schwab says there are two main reasons for the slow rate of development in bicycle design. Firstly, the double-triangle frames (which have one triangle in the front composed of the top tube, head tube, down tube and seat tube, and one in the back from the chain and seat stays) are very strong compared to any other kind of frame. Secondly, cycling’s governing body the UCI has established that road race bikes must be manufactured this way, so the market has largely followed suit.

“For the general purpose of cycling, it’s a good design and it works. It’s the human size, it’s practical, not too big, not too heavy. But there is room for improvement and the family of bicycles is bigger than what we have seen so far,” said Schwab.

Despite the team’s enthusiasm for alternate bike designs, its findings are not well accepted by the cycling establishment.

“Manufacturers are only rarely innovators, in any meaningful sense. At least, that is my perspective from outside the industry. They want to make a profit. And we are not showing them a working product, but only ideas,” said Papadopoulos.

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Fuel In The Tank

AFTER RIDING THE DEBUT SNOWY CLASSIC IN 2022, SPECIALIST CYCLING NUTRITIONIST DR GEMMA SAMPSON OFFERS INSIGHTS INTO A SMART ENERGY PLAN FOR THIS YEAR'S EVENT.

AS A CYCLING SPORTS DIETITIAN, people often (wrongly) assume that my nutrition intake and fuelling strategies are perfect all the time.

Not true! I am also human - we all have bad days and make mistakes. The key thing is that we learn from our mistakes and improve our nutritional strategies for next time. Which is why I always encourage clients to engage in reflective practice and make nutrition notes about what does and doesn't go well to be better prepared next time.

In my experience, not following or having a nutrition plan plays a big role in cyclists not being able to complete cycling events or ride at their full pace. I'd hate for you to see all your training go to waste from under-fuelling.

Back in 2021 I learned the hard way the impact under-fuelling makes during a 360km 8000m+ ultra-cycling event where I hadn't properly planned my nutrition. I was running around like crazy the day before and forgot to eat while travelling. I subsequently started the event under-fuelled and underpowered. Yes I completed it, but was completely off my usual riding pace which was incredibly frustrating! This meant that when I rode the Snowy Classic Maxi 170km ride last year, I was determined not to repeat these mistakes.

I went into Snowy Classic probably the least bike fit that I had ever been in my life. Sydney had been a complete washout in the months before, so I knew I wasn't going to be breaking any records. But with the right nutritional strategy and plan I was confident that I could ride the distance. My planning ensured that I nailed the carbohydrate load the day before, my fuelling plan during was spot on but it all unravelled when I forgot about recovery nutrition!

Learn from my nutrition mistakes and ride the Snowy Classic this year fuelled with confidence.

PLAN YOUR NUTRITION — BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER

There are three key timing points when it comes to nailing your nutrition for an event like the Snowy Classic – what you eat the day before, how you fuel during and your recovery nutrition after you finish. Each one is important for different reasons and the ideal nutritional strategy for you will be very unique. Practicing and testing your nutrition in training is key to determine what this does (or doesn't) look like.

CARB LOADING – WHAT A SPORTS DIETITIAN ATE THE DAY BEFORE SNOWY CLASSIC 2022

Fuelling starts the day before with carbohydrate loading 24h before your event.

If there was one thing I could convince cyclists to try that can markedly improve their performance for an event like the Snowy Classic, it would be to carbohydrate load for the 24h beforehand. At this year's Tour Down Under I bumped into a client who raved about how much a difference that one change alone had made to his performance and cycling capacity.

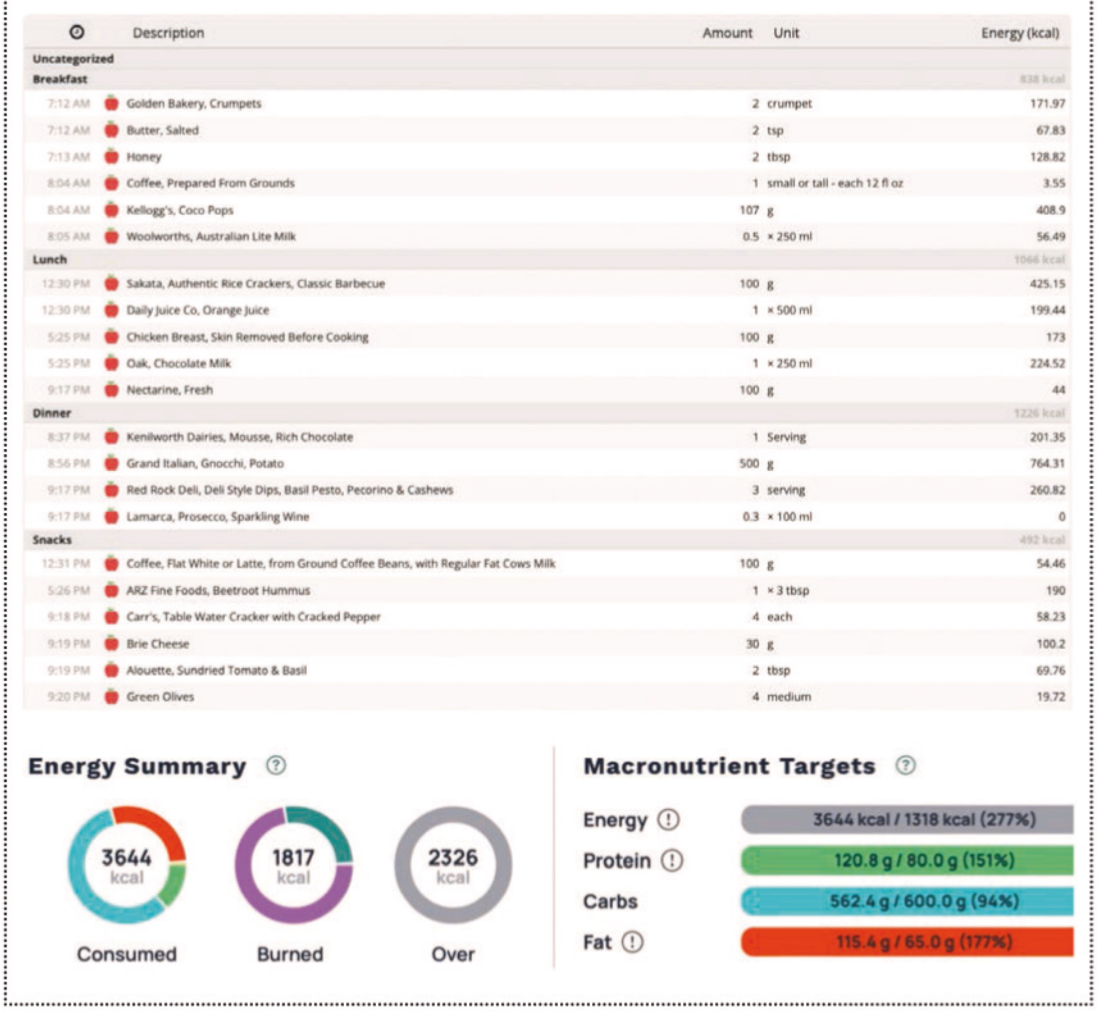
Far from overfilling yourself with pasta the night before and feeling super bloated before going to bed, there is an art to carb loading well and it starts with distributing your extra carbs throughout the entire day, cutting back the fibre, vege, protein and fats compared to a usual day. Keep your dinner normal sized with a dessert, but bump up the volume earlier in the day at breakfast and lunch to avoid feeling super full and bloated.

As a starting point, I'd recommend you increase overall carb intake the day before Snowy Classic by an additional 200g, aiming for a total of >500g using low fibre high carbohydrate foods such as white rice, potato and adding liquid carbs in the form of juice or soft drink at each meal. Planning this out and using an app to help keep you on track to eat the amount you'll need to get through is critical since it'll be much more food than usual. Remember race day nutrition isn't every day nutrition!

"...BY STARTING TO FUEL EARLIER IN THE DAY, you'll find the climbs at the end of the day much more manageable..."

THIS PAGE: A selection of 'officially approved' pre-event food options. How good do those potatoes look?

FOOD DIARY: FRIDAY, 25 MARCH 2022



	Description	Amount	Unit	Energy (kcal)
Uncategorized				
Breakfast				838 kcal
7:12 AM	Golden Bakery, Crumpets	2	crumpet	171.97
7:12 AM	Butter, Salted	2	tsp	67.83
7:13 AM	Honey	2	tbsp	128.82
8:04 AM	Coffee, Prepared From Grounds	1	small or tall - each 12 fl oz	3.55
8:04 AM	Kellogg's, Coco Pops	107	g	408.9
8:05 AM	Woolworths, Australian Lite Milk	0.5	× 250 ml	56.49
Lunch				1066 kcal
12:30 PM	Sakata, Authentic Rice Crackers, Classic Barbecue	100	g	425.15
12:30 PM	Daily Juice Co, Orange Juice	1	× 500 ml	199.44
5:25 PM	Chicken Breast, Skin Removed Before Cooking	100	g	173
5:25 PM	Oak, Chocolate Milk	1	× 250 ml	224.52
9:17 PM	Nectarine, Fresh	100	g	44
Dinner				1226 kcal
8:37 PM	Kenilworth Dairies, Mousse, Rich Chocolate	1	Serving	201.35
8:56 PM	Grand Italian, Gnocchi, Potato	500	g	764.31
9:17 PM	Red Rock Deli, Deli Style Dips, Basil Pesto, Pecorino & Cashews	3	serving	260.82
9:17 PM	Lamarca, Prosecco, Sparkling Wine	0.3	× 100 ml	0
Snacks				492 kcal
12:31 PM	Coffee, Flat White or Latte, from Ground Coffee Beans, with Regular Fat Cows Milk	100	g	54.46
5:26 PM	ARZ Fine Foods, Beetroot Hummus	1	× 3 tbsp	190
9:18 PM	Carr's, Table Water Cracker with Cracked Pepper	4	each	58.23
9:19 PM	Brie Cheese	30	g	100.2
9:19 PM	Alouette, Sundried Tomato & Basil	2	tbsp	69.76
9:20 PM	Green Olives	4	medium	19.72

Energy Summary ?

Consumed	Burned	Over
3644 kcal	1817 kcal	2326 kcal

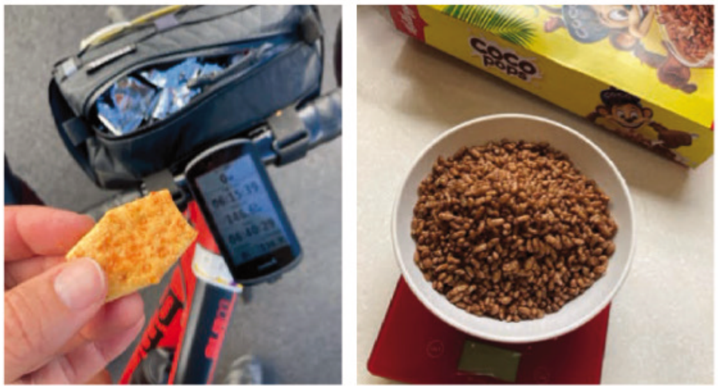
Macronutrient Targets ?

Energy !	3644 kcal / 1318 kcal (277%)
Protein !	120.8 g / 80.0 g (151%)
Carbs	562.4 g / 600.0 g (94%)
Fat !	115.4 g / 65.0 g (177%)

PLAN IN ADVANCE AND PRACTICE YOUR FUELLING STRATEGY IN TRAINING

Last year when I rode Snowy Classic I totally went in with the mindset of having an awesome day out on the bike. I wasn't keen to race it due to the months of rain and lack of training. I knew I could do the distance, but not being my 'usual' level of Girona fitness I wasn't going to be breaking any records on the course. So my fuelling consisted of pizza shapes, natural confectionary jelly snakes and whatever I picked up along the feed zones (Coke, fruit cake, sandwiches, chips etc).

Rather than just using one type of food source, you can use different foods, fuels and fluids at different points of the event according to the gradient, technicality and intensity you'll be riding at the time.



TOP: Dr Gemma Sampson recommends keeping a food diary and this can be as simple or comprehensive as you desire.

ABOVE: Snack foods on the go are highly recommended, and working out and weighing your pre-event fuel is advised.

A tip is to study the ride profile and use that to plan out your nutrition strategy. Are you going to go self supported and carry everything you need with you or rely on the rest stops? Where are the hills? Where are the feed zones? How long is it going to take you to get between certain segments? What are you going to eat when?

At 85km into the Snowy Classic you'll be confronted with the killer climb that is Beloka hill. To muscle your way up without having to unclip, you want to make sure you are well fuelled long before you arrive and here liquid rapid carbs will serve you better than solid food choices. By starting to fuel earlier in the day, you'll find the climbs at the end of the day much more manageable than you would by under-fuelling.

DON'T FORGET YOUR RECOVERY NUTRITION AFTER YOU FINISH

This is where my nutrition strategy fell apart at the debut Snowy Classic (proof that even sports dietitians aren't perfect!). In my excitement of riding in such an awesome place and meeting new people, I completely forgot about recovery nutrition. I wandered into a supermarket with the plan of buying some food or fluids to help with recovery (my choice default is chocolate milk) but because I wasn't feeling hungry at the time didn't feel like eating anything I saw. So I didn't. Rookie mistake!

This meant that when I left the village an hour or two later after chatting with new friends, on the 10km climb back to my accommodation I hunger flatted. My energy dropped SO BAD to the point that I couldn't even measure my glucose levels at the time they had crashed so low! I sat there on the side of the highway for a good 20 minutes, finishing off any remaining jelly snakes and shapes before I was in a position to get back on the bike again. Learn from my mistake and think about what you will eat after you've finished your ride. You want a combination of food and fluids containing carbohydrate, protein for both rapid and long-term recovery. Chocolate milk or a smoothie can be a great starting point, but make sure you team it with some solid food and enjoy a full meal as soon as you can. This can include a burger and a celebratory drink or two, if you drink alcohol. Sports dietitian approved! BA

NO AID STATION?

GU
ENERGY CHEWS
STRAWBERRY
GU
Stroopwafel
WILD BERRIES
CHOCOLATE OUTRAGE
GU
CHOCOLATE OUTRAGE
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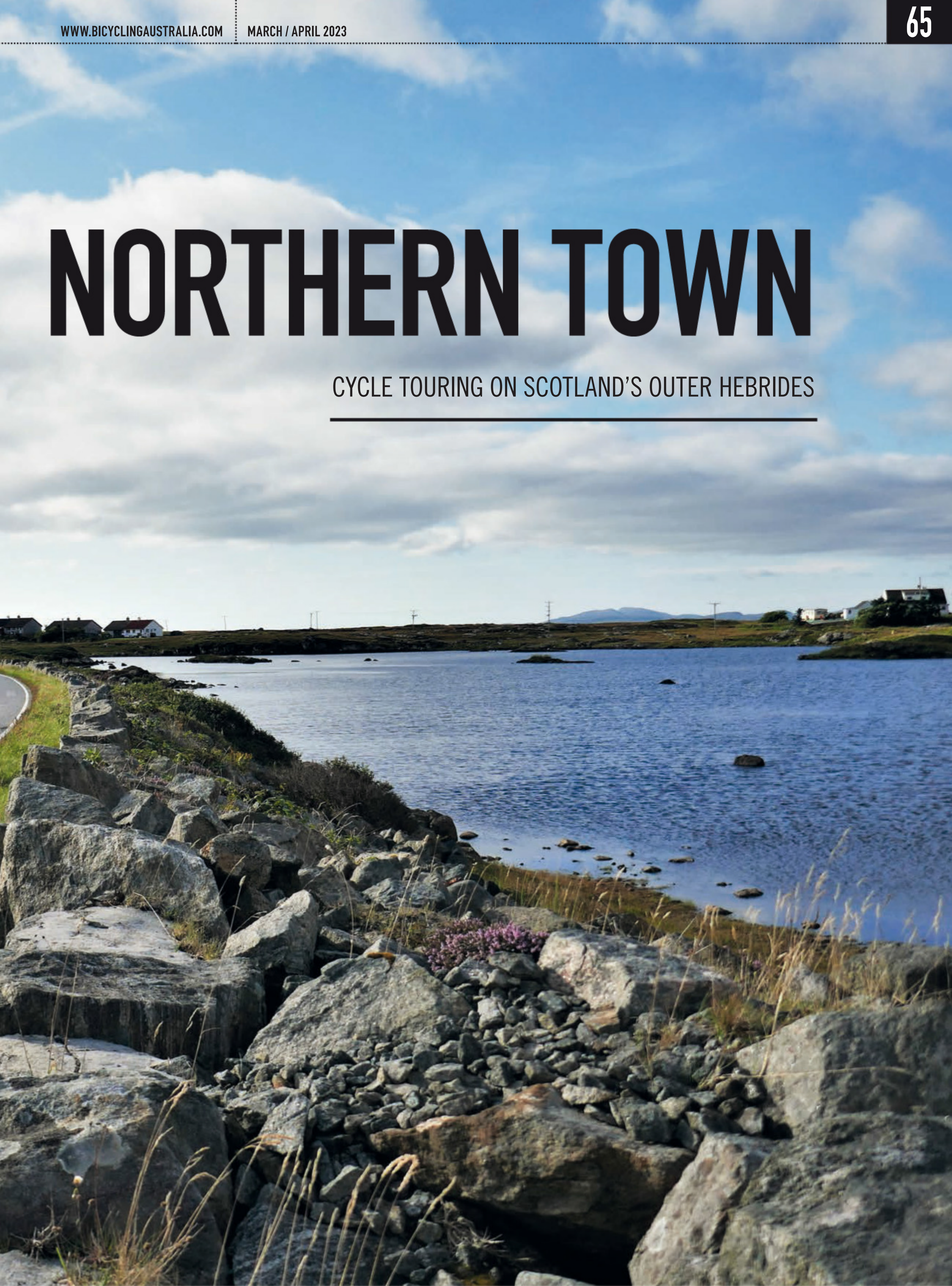
WORDS & IMAGES: AMY MCPHERSON

LIFE IN A

Visiting riders enjoy the quiet roads and surprisingly mild conditions while cycling an Outer Hebridean road. So many dream destinations, so little time!



NORTHERN TOWN

CYCLE TOURING ON SCOTLAND'S OUTER HEBRIDES

Far more than 'just a cycling trip', Amy found herself immersed in centuries of Outer Hebridean history and culture.

BLINK ONCE, YOU'D THINK YOU WERE IN THE Whitsundays. Blink twice, Mauritius, maybe. Anywhere where the water is crystal turquoise and the sand porcelain white.

Wherever you think you might be, you most definitely won't believe you are in Scotland.

Then, just as quick as the sun flashes its brilliance and disappears, the chilly wind stabs you at your core, sending you into a violent shudder. Then there's those little pests, midges, biting at your exposed skin, not letting go until you ride on.

Yep. This is definitely Scotland. Beyond the Scottish Highlands, this is the wild Atlantic, next-stop-Iceland-kind of wild. And it is increasingly becoming wildly popular with road (and off-road) cyclists.

The Outer Hebrides is a cluster of islands off the Scottish west coast on the Atlantic Ocean. Due to its geo-location and isolation, the group of islands has the highest percentage of Gaelic speakers in Scotland. I had been lured there by the remoteness of the place, and promises of great cycling along the Hebridean Way, 297 km of stunning landscapes, interesting heritage and culture with a touch of post-ride whisky.

There are no professional races here, no bucket list climbs to conquer and no one comes to the Outer Hebrides for training rides. Even though the winding, undulating roads are perfect for some strengthening work, it probably isn't a place to come to break a PB. And yet, despite the location, despite the insects and no opportunity to claim a KOM glory, the Hebridean Way is popular with road cyclists looking for something wild, something different to tour.

Scottish cyclist Mark Beaumont completed the entire Hebridean Way in 24 hours. I mean, how hard can it be, right?

"Do you want the good news or the bad news?" asked the guide on the first morning of our cycle touring trip in the Outer Hebrides. I looked out to the pale blue cloudless sky, the landscape silenced by the still air, temperature

TRAVEL TIPS:

TOUR WITH…

Take the stress out of planning by travelling with Wilderness Scotland (www.wildernessscotland.com), whose cycling journeys include all road (and ferry) transports, accommodation, some meals and on road support. Not to mention excellent guides for the invaluable local knowledge.

DO IT YOURSELF

The excellent Cicerone guide on cycling on the Hebrides provides very useful information on how to plan your cycle touring journey on the Outer Hebrides, including interesting detours off the official route, ferry information between the islands and traffic rules on these single lane causeways.

https://www.cicerone.co.uk/cycling-in-the-hebrides-second

THE SPIRIT OF

KOSCIUSZKO

PALE ALE

THE SPIRIT OF
KOSCIUSZKO
PALE ALE
THE SPIRIT OF
KOSCIUSZKO
Refreshing
PALE ALE
4.5% ALC/VOL
RICH MALTINESS WITH A FRUITY HOP FINISH
330mL

KOSCIUSZKO PALE ALE IS YOUR CRISP, COLD REWARD AFTER A LONG DAY ON THE MOUNTAIN. BREWED AT THE ICONIC BANJO PATERSON INN, OUR FLAVOURFUL, EASY-DRINKING BEER QUICKLY BECAME A LOCAL CLASSIC.

CRAFTED FROM A BLEND OF PALE ALE, MUNICH MALTS AND GALAXY HOPS OUR PALE DELIVERS A PLEASING MALTINESS WITH A REFRESHING FRUITY HOP FINISH.

Get the facts
DrinkWise.org.au

WHEN TO GO

The Hebridean islands are affected by the Atlantic, with a short window of late April to end of June as the warmest and calmest months to visit. However, visit around September and October to enjoy less crowded roads and possibly avoid the mass of midges season as well.

WHAT TO PACK

Weather on the islands can be unpredictable and it is not uncommon to experience four seasons in a day. So bring your best windproof kit, gloves and overshoes to avoid getting caught by the cold. A warm mid-layer that can be taken on and off between sprouts of sunshine and of course, some swim wear should you be brave enough to do some cold water dipping in the sea!

warm by Atlantic standards. I could not think of anything bad he could possibly say.

"Well, the good news, as you can see, we have a cloudless and windless day for cycling," stating the obvious, he continues. "The bad news, is cloudless and windless days are also when the dreaded midges will be most active."

The infamous west coast midges. Small, but very effective at swarming around the unsuspected human who would ultimately pause to rest from their adventures, be it leaning on a rock, dashing behind the trees for a convenience stop or simply to check the GPS for directions. You won't even see them coming, but you'll definitely feel them.

The trick is to keep those legs moving.

Our trip started with a loop around Barra Island in the south, famous for being the only place in the world where schedule flights land on a beach. We detour to check out the 'air-beach' (airport) before looping the coastal way around. It was one of those glorious days when you forget you are in Scotland. Stopping at Castlebay for a waterside snack, Kisimul Castle, the only remaining medieval castle in the Outer Hebrides floats on shimmering water. This belonged to Clan MacNeil, which is currently leased to Historic Scotland for 1000 years at £1 and 1 bottle of whisky per annum. Bargain.

Between Barra and the Uists, we took a ferry. The entire trip spanning ten islands from bottom to top would see us take two ferries and cross six causeways, which makes this cycling route a whole different kind of adventure. Water surrounded us, and my eyes were peeled to spot any movement above and on the waters. I was entertained by fighting seagulls and diving gannets, and my ears sharpen, waiting for someone to shout "dolphins!" as we sailed the passages. Along the causeways of the Uists, where the tarmac is low and there is a feeling I was cycling on the surface of the water, were signs warning road users of otters crossing. Disappointingly throughout the five days, I didn't have to give way once to any otters.

During the transport breaks on the ferry, I took the chance to chat to our guide Simon Harry, who has been leading road cycling trips with Wilderness Scotland for eight years. Having cycled in Africa, New Zealand and

LUSKENTYRE
BEACH HUT
Gifts
Hot/Cold Drinks
Ices/ Snacks

Stretching more than 200km, there are more than 50 uninhabited islands in the chain. With 15 other inhabited islands, there's a total population of just 26,830 hardy locals. And plenty of quiet roads!

the far east, he feels Scotland is one of those underrated destinations for cycling and is where he feels most exhilarated when on two wheels.

And the Outer Hebrides itinerary is his favourite above all.

"For me," he said, "it is not about breaking your cycling records or getting a top ten on the Strava leader board. It is about the journey we take with likeminded folk, taking time to slow down and experiencing a place relatively few visit."

And when only few visit a place, there is less traffic on the roads. Even the single lane causeways were surprisingly quiet.The Outer Hebrides is so hard to get to that only those determined to ride its roads bother to come all the way.

On the Isle of Harris we hit the largest hill on the trip along the 'Golden Road', a ring road around the isle connecting picturesque villages and a kaleidoscope of landscape. The undulating roads gave the legs some workout before we eventually arrived at the famous Luskentyre beach. From afar, the shallow sand banks and the aquamarine water is a sight to behold. It was where I momentarily believed I was in the tropics.

What makes cycling the Hebridean Way special, is that much of the highlights are not really about the cycling. It is the experiences you get to have in this remote part of Scotland. The famous 'Harris Tweed', can be found on Harris, and visiting a tweed maker is an insight into this material art form that is slowly dying out.

Continuing on, we stop at the teardrop memorial to Bonnie Prince Charlie, one of the leaders of the Jacobites revolt. On our last leg of the trip on the Isle of Lewis, we pass a small garden decorated with the jaw bone of a blue whale, which came ashore in 1920.

> **"...WHAT MAKES CYCLING THE HEBRIDEAN WAY SPECIAL, is that much of the highlights are not really about the cycling..."**

GETTING THERE

Getting there takes a bit of time commitment and that is what makes the cycling worthwhile.

The closest airport is Inverness, which is the gateway to the Scottish Highlands and surrounds. From there, hire a car and drive to one of the ferry ports serviced by Caledonian MacBrayne (CalMac for short) https://www.calmac.co.uk/ – Ullapool on the mainland or Uig on the Isle of Skye which will get you to the Outer Hebrides in a few hours. You must book in advance if you are travelling with a car.

Those looking to tick off a bucket list and travelling light, could fly directly from Glasgow to Barra Island, the only place in the world that has scheduled flights land on a beach with Loganair (https://www.loganair.co.uk/). Flights are dependent on tide schedules but the landing is said to be breathtaking!

Thinking about a cycling trip to the far-flung northern outpost? You'll want to pack cycling kit for a wide range of weather regardless of the time of year.

The highlight for many, is the 5,000 year old Callanish stones, a sight that would woo anyone with an Outlander obsession, and a great place for regrouping and a quick recovery cuppa.

Of course, there's always great seafood to be enjoyed, and since it's Scotland, whisky to be consumed. Dinner was always a great affair, spoilt for choice of great local fare of locally sourced fish and lamb to refuel from a day on the saddle.

Five days of cycle touring was slowly wearing down the chamois and as we tackled the final stretch of the journey towards the Butt of Lewis, I couldn't help feel a sense of anticipation to the finish line.

"This is my favourite part!" Simon shouts.

We had been bothered with a persistent headwind all day, which kept the midges at bay but also provided some moral challenges. The final ascent, when the lighthouse began to appear on the horizon at the Butt, was what I needed for a final push. The Butt of Lewis is supposedly the windiest location in the United Kingdom, and if you stayed long enough, a place where one might catch the Northern Lights.

Approaching the cliff edge and leaning on my bike, I can't help but smile towards the North Atlantic, where heavy waves batter the rocks below and sea birds flock and chatter noisily on a natural arch called the "Eye of the Butt". I take the name as a Scottish attempt at humour.

Cycling the Hebridean Way had truly been an adventure. We complete it in five days covering comfortable distances each day. It isn't record breaking but no one really comes here for a time trial.

With the bikes racked up on the support vehicle, the group shared a celebratory drink in a sheltered cove with a sandy beach. The water looked inviting, so much so we attempted for a post-ride dip.

Nope, too cold. Still in Scotland after all. BA

For more information: https://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/hebrideanway

PIT STOPS

A network of businesses on the Outer Hebrides that support cyclists on the road are called 'Pit Stops'. These include repair shops, cafes and restaurants and accommodation that welcome and support cycle tourists on their journey.

For a full listing of Pit Stop businesses visit: https://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/hebrideanway/pit-stops

STAY: LOCHBOISDALE HOTEL

A family run boutique hotel by the ferry terminal of Lochboisdale on the Isle of South Uist, offering comfortable rooms, great meals and bike storage for cyclists.

https://www.lochboisdale.com/

STAY: JOHN'S BUNKHOUSE

Built in the Hebridean 'Blackhouse' style consisting of three rooms accommodating up to eight people on bunk beds, John's Bunkhouse is for those looking for basic comfort with a bit of cultural heritage. There is a bike shed and a drying room available.

https://johnsbunkhouse.com/

EAT: VATERSAY HALL AND CAFÉ

A community run enterprise, the Vatersay Hall and Café is a friendly place to fuel up on the isle of Vatersay, the start of the Hebridean Way. Open April - September, drop in for some simple bites and a hot cuppa while enjoying the surrounding views.

EAT: TALLA NA MARA – VISITOR CENTRE

Talla na Mara means the centre by the sea in Gaelic, and this modern facility is a multi-purpose site set up to support local artisans and community work. While you refuel and drink in the scenery of Niseaboist beach, you can also shop for delicious local produce or art pieces. There is a sheltered bike rack and bike repair station onsite.

https://www.tallanamara.co.uk/

EAT: CRUST LIKE THAT

Guaranteed to be the best pizza on the Isles. This little shed on the side of the road on the Isle of Lewis is popular with those with any form of wheeled transport. Great woodfired pizzas freshly made to order, eaten among the wild surrounds of the island.

https://www.crustlikethat.co.uk/

DRINK: AM POLITICIAN

Named after cargo ship *S.S Politician* in 1961 which sunk just along the coast nearby carrying a ship-load of whisky. The locals salvaged the bottles and had a ball, inspiring Sir Compton Mackenzie to write the novel *Whisky Galore.* A pub with interesting stories to tell in Eriskay.

SHOP: HEBRIDEAN SMOKEHOUSE

Located at Clachan in North Uist, this is a great place to stock up on locally reared and smoked seafood. Yep, that Scottish smoked salmon is calling your name!

https://hebrideansmokehouse.com/

REPAIRS: BESPOKE BICYCLE HEBRIDES

A team of experienced mechanics at Bespoke are available for repairs should you run into trouble. A mobile service is available for emergency support. The shop also offers bike sales and rental, and a friendly café on-site.

https://www.bespokebicycles.co.uk/

clubs.

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Latest Wahoo ROAM

WORDS & IMAGES: LUKE MEERS

Roam If You Want To

LUKE MEER'S ROAMS AROUND ADELAIDE WITH THE WAHOO ELEMNT ROAM V2

W 3 SEC
225
MILES
148³
TOTAL
8:32:07
RPM
91
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MPH
17⁹
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LAP
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PAGE
wahoo

REMEMBER NOT TOO MANY years back, when essentially everyone who had a GPS bike computer was using a Garmin? How different the landscape is now. In a relatively short span of years, we've seen the rise of numerous brands bringing quality products into the market.

This competition does great things in terms of consumers getting new and improved products and the corresponding rate of expansion of features. Wahoo quickly became one of the big players and we've now got the second generation of their computers on the market. Here is a look at the new ELEMNT Roam V2.

First, a quick rundown of the core features and changes, then we will move on to some thoughts on user experience and assessing where it sits in the range compared to the Wahoo Bolt.

The Roam sits at the top of the Wahoo computer range and, at around $600, it has the price to match. The new model has dual-band GPS for improved accuracy as well as a built-in gyroscope and compass for more rapid map adjustments. The memory has been expanded from 4GB to 32GB allowing for more map data and more courses to be held in memory.

One of the first things you notice is the size, at 69mm the screen is enjoyably large (more on this later) and now boasts 64 colours (up from 8 in the v1 model). The brightness and clarity of the display is fantastic. The matt surface combines with strong contrast to make the screen readily visible in all light conditions.

The Roam keeps its two multicoloured led arrays, one down the left and one across the top of the unit. These can be customised to indicate where you are in data fields such as heart rate, power or speed. My experience when riding was that I didn't seem to use them much. This was largely due to the fact that many of the data fields can be selected to light up the actual display areas for that field with the colour of what zone you're in. I.e. The power area might be showing 250w and also be filled in as blue to represent zone 2. This is one of my favourite features of the display.

> **"…at 69mm the screen is enjoyably large AND NOW BOASTS 64 COLOURS…"**

The battery life is quoted as 17 hours, I found this to be pretty close to the mark, even with multiple sensors connected. This battery life, whilst not being incredible, is more than enough to get most riders through at least a week of rides. The unit itself weighs in at 100g plus another 40g for the mount which forms a nicely aero-looking connection with the base of the Roam.

A new feature that has been added to the Wahoo ELEMNT range is what they have called "summit segments". This operates when you are riding a course that you have downloaded onto the head unit. It will show the "climbs" that are upcoming when you can expect them, their distance and

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200.1mi - Strava
TOUR DIVIDE PT. 1
100.2mi - RideWithGPS
GRAND FONDO PACIFICO
50.3mi - Wahoo
COFFEE SHOP SPIN
14.5mi - Strava
BACK
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wahoo

the average gradient. Once on a climb, the display switches to show you the climb profile along with your position, distance to the end and expected finish time. The system isn't perfect. It doesn't necessarily split the climbs exactly where a human might, but it works pretty well and it is pleasantly informative when riding in unfamiliar areas.

So what is it like to use? The setup is easy. Everything is done through the Wahoo ELEMNT app. It makes setting up pages much easier than doing it on the head unit. I had only wished that I could have transferred pages and data fields from my Bolt over automatically. I discovered after having set up the Roam that you actually can with a function called "backup and restore".

As mentioned earlier, the large display is just fantastic. It felt giant after a couple of years using the Bolt. Whilst the size adds a little weight; for many people the extra ease in viewing data fields, maps and elevation profiles will be worth it.

Navigation through each page is performed by pressing one of the three convex (formally concave) buttons. If you have more than 3 pages, the fact that you can only scroll through in one direction becomes a bit frustrating. The number of fields on each page can be reduced during the ride via the side buttons, this is the equivalent of zooming in, and is a neat and effective feature. Finally, the navigation functions is really clear and effective. I was riding in Adelaide, testing the unit during the Tour Down Under and every ride I did, I would simply load the route from Strava. The turn-by-turn instructions were impressively easy to follow, even for the notoriously tricky transitions from road to bike path or visa versa.

The big question that kept coming to my mind whilst using the Roam was: would I prefer this or my Wahoo Bolt. The answer isn't straightforward. Essentially the functionality for the two units is the same in almost every area. The Bolt is smaller, a bit lighter, and has a couple of hours less battery life. Really the core differentiators are screen size and price and the decision will depend on the individual's leaning. If map and data visibility trumps the extra $200, the Roam will be the one for you. If like me you're thinking of the other cycling bits and pieces that $200 could go towards, maybe the Bolt would strike the right balance of cost and functionality. Essentially, both are excellent, reliable units. BA

The latest incarnation of the Wahoo Roam features a seemingly incalculable number of customisable display options as illustrated in this array of screenshots.

KPH
00
Wollongong
START
PAGE
wahoo
KPH
Keiraville
Gwynneville
West Wollongong
Wollongong
Mangerton
1km
START
PAGE
wahoo

SPECIFICATIONS

Physical Dimensions: 9.05cm x 5.95cm x 2.05cm
Display Size: 6.9cm
Screen Resolution: 240x400
Weight: ~ 95g
Battery: USB rechargeable via USB-C
Battery Life: 17 hours
Waterproof Rating: IPX7
Supported Satellites: GPS, GLONASS, BEIDOU, Galileo, QZSS, SBAS, NavIC
Operating Temperature: -20 to +70 deg C
RRP $599.85
https://au.wahoofitness.com/

WORDS: PETER MANIATY

Summer 2023 Castelli Tested

EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK IT SEEMS THERE'S ANOTHER NEW CLOTHING BRAND. BUT LONG-ESTABLISHED NAMES LIKE CASTELLI – BASED IN NORTHERN ITALY FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS – STILL HAVE PLENTY TO OFFER, AS PETER MANIATY RECENTLY DISCOVERED.

CASTELLI A BLOCCO JERSEY & ENDURANCE 3 BIB SHORTS

Some of the first kit I ever owned was Castelli. After several years with precisely none in my wardrobe, it was a nostalgic treat to get the chance to test out this excellent ensemble for the Aussie summer. Well-made, sharply-priced and super-comfortable, it's fair to say I was impressed. Chances are you will be too. Let's take a closer look.

A BLOCCO JERSEY

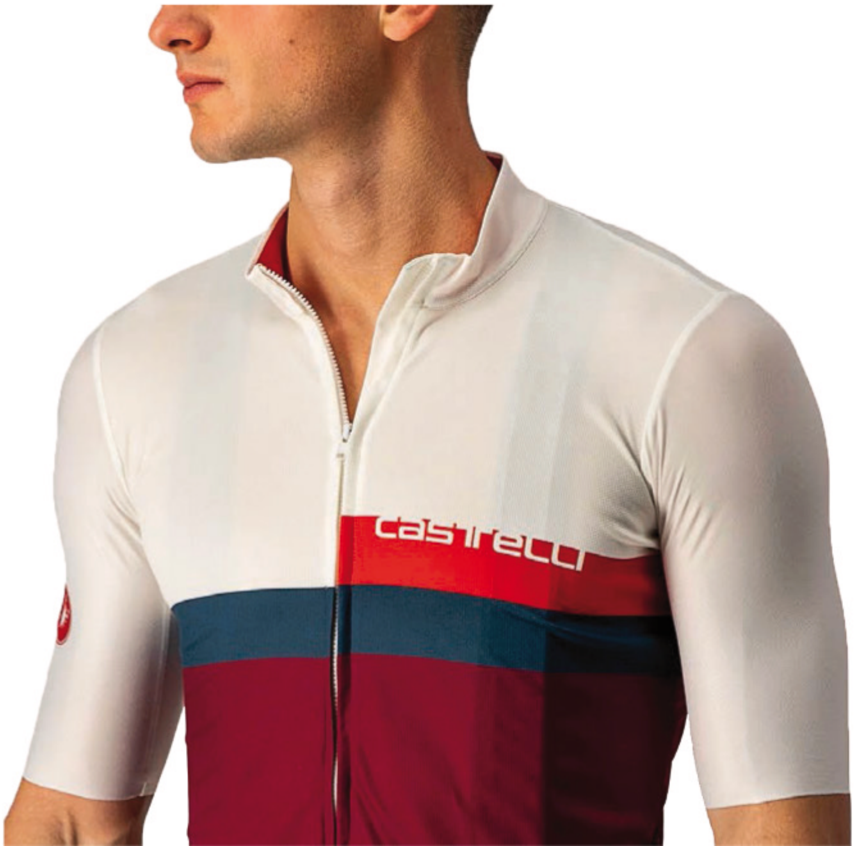
RRP: $159

The A Blocco jersey is a super lightweight and breathable summer jersey. Thanks to the use of ProSecco Micromesh fabric (100% polyester) on the torso and Velocity Rev2 fabric on the sleeves, it's also extremely fast drying. The styling is simple and elegant – there's nothing especially brash or flashy– which suits me just fine.

Created from Castelli's 'Squadra' base model, I found the cut reasonably relaxed and, aided by the close-to-body fit and no seams at the sleeve ends, very comfortable on all rides, long and short.

It also boasts three good-sized rear pockets making it a great all-round jersey choice, especially for the warmer months. A quick styling note: I found the white fabric on the review jersey quite see-through (other colourways are available).

Colours: Ivory & Red-Blue-Bordeaux (reviewed), Electric Lime & Black-Blue-Magenta, Black & Red-Dark Grey, Savile Blue & China Blue-Azzurro.



ENDURANCE 3 BIB SHORTS

RRP: $219

Bib choice can make or break any ride, and Castelli's Endurance 3 bibs are simply

In riding and reviewing the latest gear from Castelli, Pete Maniaty says "The styling is simple and elegant – there's nothing especially brash or flashy– which suits me just fine."

> **"…Well-made, sharply-priced and super-comfortable, IT'S FAIR TO SAY I WAS IMPRESSED…"**

excellent. Fitted with the top-end Progetto X2 Air Seamless seat pad and pancake flat GIRO3 leg grippers, they're extremely comfortable on rides from the first pedal stroke to the last. Made from Castelli's Endurance Evolution compression fabric, the anatomic fit is firm enough without being restrictive, while the main seams are located up around the hip area which ensures no unnecessary rubbing. Everything is held in place with mesh bib straps and backing to maximise airflow and aid moisture management. The 'off-black' colourway looks great too. Very impressive.

Colours: Savile Blue (reviewed), Black.

ENDURANCE GLOVE

RRP: $75

Snug, comfortable and easy to fit. The backing features Castelli's Endurance Evolution fabric, while the palm boasts extra gel padding (known as the Castelli Damping System) to provide welcome added support on longer rides. An impressively versatile short-finger road glove, although reasonably pricey at $75 for the pair.

Colours: Savile Blue (reviewed), Black.

T 18 SUPERLEGGERA SOCKS

RRP: $30

It's been a while since I've worn such crisp white socks – and these 18cm beauties certainly didn't disappoint. Super stretchy and comfortable, they're made with a 200-needle construction using Meryl Skinlife yarns, which also include antimicrobial silver ions to help reduce foot odour. The lightweight mesh makes them ideal for warm weather riding. Winter? Probably not so much.

Colours: White (reviewed), Black, Bordeaux, Azzurro Italia, Military Green & Fiery Red, Savile Blue. BA

More at echelonsports.com.au

WORDS & IMAGES: NAT BROMHEAD

The Power Of Beet

PURE
SPORTS NUTRITION
BEET ENDURANCE
PURE CLEAN PERFORMANCE RANGE
REAL CONCENTRATED BEETROOT JUICE POWDER WITH NATURAL NITRATES
150g NET | MAKES 1.25 LITRES
PURE
SPORTS NUTRITION
PROTEIN CONCENT

NITRATES, BEETROOT, AND FUELLING YOUR RIDE

TYPICALLY, WHEN READING JUST about anything, it's the first few words that pique our interest or grab our attention. But taking a glance at some of the Pure Sports Nutrition products we've been recently reviewing, it was the final word that stood out. That word? Nitrates.

'Real concentrated beetroot juice powder with natural nitrates', states the company's Beet Endurance supplement.

Beetroot is well-known for its numerous health benefits including the ability to lower blood pressure.

A borderline superfood, 100 grams of raw beetroot contains around 44 calories, 1.7g of protein and 2g of fibre along with folate, manganese, magnesium, copper, potassium, vitamin C, B-vitamins and iron.

But it's nitrates that we are mostly interested in here, magical little vegetable-based nitrogen and oxygen compounds that help regulate blood pressure and improve circulation. And from there, the link to the potential benefits of athletic performance is obvious.

Numerous beetroot juice/cyclist/cycling studies have come to similar conclusions – that "dietary nitrates improve maximal neuromuscular power in humans".

One of the most thorough and conclusive studies found the intake of high doses of concentrated beetroot juice led to riders using three per cent less oxygen over those drinking a placebo. You can read more about this online via the Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition.

Being a big fan of the humble beetroot, and a long-time keen student of its potential benefits for cyclists, Pure Sports Nutritions' 'Pure Beet Endurance' was certainly the standout product to try when a recent sample box arrived by mail.

Opening the stay-fresh foil packet, the beetroot scent was instantly obvious and quite addictive to smell. Inside was 150g of freeze-dried concentrated beetroot powder with no additives or preservatives. Following the instructions, we mixed three teaspoons into 250ml of pure rainwater, stirred it thoroughly and sipped. In the glass the drink looked and tasted a lot like that of fresh beetroot juice. Concentrated by a multiple of 10, Pure Nutrition state that each pouch contains the equivalent of 1.6kg of beetroot … and tastes like it too.

Beetroot juice has a distinct, earthy flavour that some people love and others find a bit off-putting. The taste of beet juice can be quite strong and may not be to everyone's liking, but many people find that it has pleasant, slightly sweet and earthy 'terra' tones.

Summing up, over recent years beetroot juice has gained popularity among athletes and fitness enthusiasts, particularly cyclists, for its potential health benefits. Studies have suggested that drinking beetroot juice can improve overall performance and help cyclists sustain slightly higher energy levels for longer periods of time, allowing them to ride faster and further. Beetroot juice is high in natural nitrates which can help to widen blood vessels and improve blood flow, providing a boost to endurance and exercise performance. Additionally, beetroot juice is a good source of vitamins and minerals, such as potassium and magnesium, which help to support overall health and well-being. BA

> **"…BEETROOT JUICE CAN IMPROVE ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE and help cyclists sustain energy levels for longer periods of time…"**

Pure Sports Nutrition products are gaining popularity in Australia and can be seen on the counters at many local bike shops. All their products include all natural ingredients. More at www.puresportsnutrition.com

WORDS & IMAGES: NICOLA RUTZOU

Ridden & Reviewed: The Buffalo Bike

THIS HEAVY, STEEL SINGLE-SPEED BIKE WITH BACK-PEDAL BRAKES IS PROBABLY THE LAST THING YOU'D EXPECT TO SEE IN THE PAGES OF BICYCLING AUSTRALIA MAGAZINE. BUT SINCE TREK HAS NAMED IT THEIR BIKE OF THE YEAR FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS, WE THOUGHT WE'D BETTER TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AND RIDE ONE FOR OURSELVES.

CALLED THE BUFFALO BIKE AND named after the tough African animal, this durable steed is ideal for the job it's called upon to perform. It's the flagship of the charity, World Bicycle Relief (WBR), that was founded in 2005 by FK Day (Founder of SRAM) and Leah Missbach Day following the Indian Ocean tsunami.

While meeting with aid groups on the ground in Sri Lanka, the Days realised the potential value a bicycle distribution program could provide. With support from SRAM and other industry leaders, FK and Leah launched WBR, and delivered over 24,000 bicycles to displaced survivors in Sri Lanka, providing access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods while reconnecting entire communities.

For most people in the developed world like Australia, a bicycle is recreational. But for many in developing countries, it is an inexpensive, sustainable form of mobility, that can mean the difference between seeing a doctor, getting to school, or making a living – or not.

WBR developed the Buffalo bike as its own sturdy bicycle to handle the rough, punishing conditions, and the bikes we ride for leisure are unsuitable.

THE BIKE

The Buffalo Bicycle is engineered for heavy loads, long distances, and rugged terrain, using high-quality parts and materials designed specifically to meet riders' needs.

Unsurprisingly, it's quite heavy but it provides a smooth ride, particularly on bitumen roads in suburban Sydney. I rode it around my suburb including a couple of trips to the local supermarket and other localities. Being a single-speed, I was reluctant to tackle any steep hills but a gentle incline was no issue.

The ride position is very upright so it feels vastly different from the road bike I'm used to riding, but it has an indestructible persona that you don't get when riding a lighter bike. I found the back-pedal brake a challenge, after riding a bike with hand-operated brakes, it seemed like a throwback to my childhood.

But unlike my road bike, the Buffalo is built for simplicity and low maintenance.

The bikes are manufactured by Giant in Taiwan, with all bicycles assembled locally. WBR employs more than 50 assemblers globally, to build and deliver the rugged bikes.

Let's start with the drivetrain. It's a single-speed with heavy-duty cranks and chain. It has a coaster (back-pedal) internal-hub brake making it robust and easily serviced. The bottom bracket (we all love to talk about bottom brackets, particularly with ceramic bearings!) has caged bearings with a heat-treated, hardened spindle.

The frame and fork are built to carry heavy loads which might be several people at once or loads of cargo. The rear rack is designed to carry 100 kg! – although I didn't get anywhere near that weight for my test ride. I have visited Rwanda, a country in central Africa where WBR has previously operated and seen first-hand the large amount

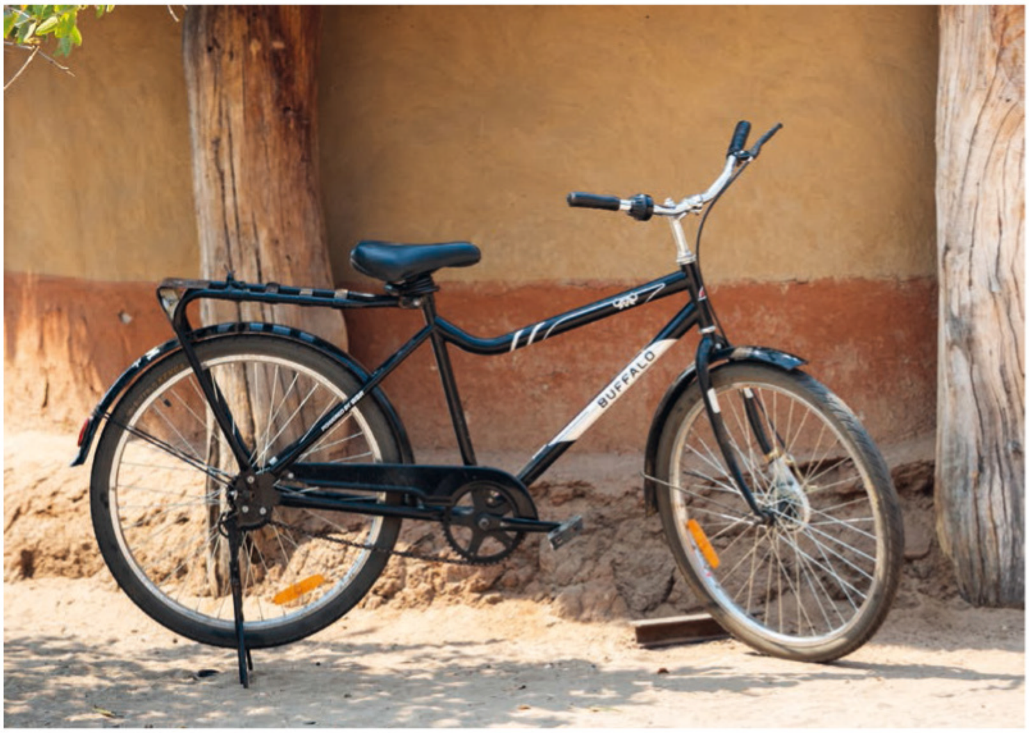
BUFFALO
KENDA

of cargo many people carry on their bikes. They often don't ride the bike, instead, it is so loaded up with cargo that the rider pushes it along the road instead!

WBR tells me that the Buffalo is tested to be ten times stronger than traditional bikes. The frame is heavy-gauge steel that is TIG-welded and comes in only one size to fit most riders. I'm just 160 cm in height and I rode it with ease. The whole bike is designed to be compatible with common spare parts.

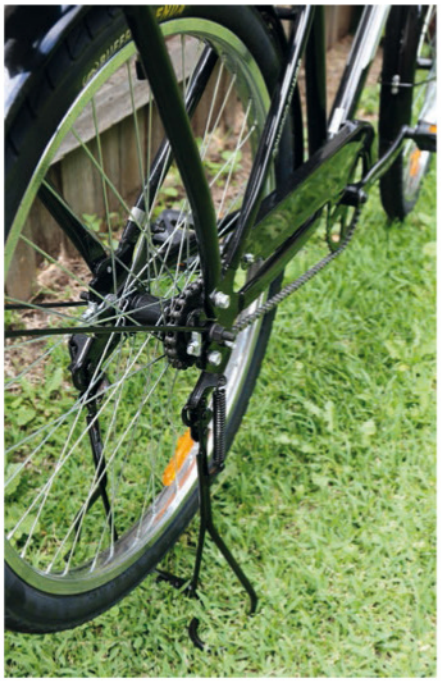
The frame is complemented by heavy-duty steel rims with, stainless steel spokes, and puncture-resistant nylon casing, long-wear tyres. I rode it without fear of getting a puncture on my local streets. I figured if the bike can be ridden over rough dirt roads in Africa, it could easily sustain my local pot-holed streets.

The model I tested also included a front brake operated



Probably the most life-changing bicycle you'll ever see in this magazine, the Buffalo has been named Trek's Bike Of The Year for the past two years.

BUFFALO
POWERED BY WBR
KENDA



POWERED BY WBR

by a lever on the handlebars. WBR explained that this is a recent addition to the bike which has been included after feedback from riders. As mentioned earlier, many Buffalo bike owners use the bike to carry cargo and push it rather than ride, and a hand-operated brake ensures they can slow down a little easier.

Finally, the Buffalo has a comfortable durable seat (no Lycra padding required), an easily adjusted steel seat post, flat pedals with forged axles, steel fenders, and heavy-duty chain guard. It also has a locking, spring-loaded stand at the rear which makes it very easy to keep the bike stable when you're not riding and to load up.

THE CHARITY

An integral part of WBR's program is the 2,600-plus trained field mechanics who ensure that riders have regular access to quality maintenance and spare parts. The charity also operates more than 50 local retail shops, where people can purchase spare parts and invest in a Buffalo Bicycle.

WBR works with companies, governments, collaborators, and competitors to scale the availability of quality bicycles, especially for women and girls. Its short-term goal is to distribute one million bicycles and to empower five million people by 2025. The long-term vision is to inspire all sectors to address the transportation needs of nearly one billion people who lack access to all-weather roads and transport.

> "...I have visited Rwanda where WBR has previously operated and seen first-hand THE LARGE AMOUNT OF CARGO MANY PEOPLE CARRY ON THEIR BIKES..."

Several features have contributed to the success of World Bicycle Relief's Buffalo bike including the 100kg payload, the sturdy and simple build, back-pedal brakes and the tool kit – a shifting spanner.

WBR is currently operating in Colombia, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, and since 2005 has delivered programs in more than 15 countries in Asia, Africa and the Americas.

CAN I BUY ONE?

Not exactly. While a Buffalo bike costs around $200, they are not typically for sale to the general public. What you can do is buy one for somebody else – a person or group of people in serious need of transport for a myriad of life-changing reasons. For more on how you can help WBR email au@worldbicyclerelief.org Or visit https://worldbicyclerelief.org/australia-office/ BA

THE BOTTOM LINE.

- The Buffalo bike weighs 23 kg
- 635,478 Buffalo Bicycles have been distributed
- $215 pays for the cost of a Buffalo bike
- 2,680 mechanics trained
- 50 Buffalo bicycle shops have been established

ATLAS.
MADE TO
LOSE.
FOCUS

WORDS & IMAGES: PETER MANIATY

Tested: Officine Mattio Lemma 2.0

THREE MONTHS AGO, PETER MANIATY HAD NEVER HEARD OF BOUTIQUE ITALIAN BICYCLE MANUFACTURER, OFFICINE MATTIO. NOW, AFTER PUTTING THE SUPERB LEMMA 2.0 THROUGH ITS PACES OVER THE FESTIVE SEASON, HE WON'T SOON FORGET.

HOW MUCH IS PROVENANCE worth? It's a fundamental, perhaps even existential, question for a bespoke bicycle brand and one I found myself constantly asking during the course of this immensely enjoyable month-long review. Whilst still not entirely sure I have the answer, I do know the Lemma 2.0 is a sublime carbon road bike with a romance-laden backstory and a price-tag that's likely to cause plenty of chatter wherever it appears.

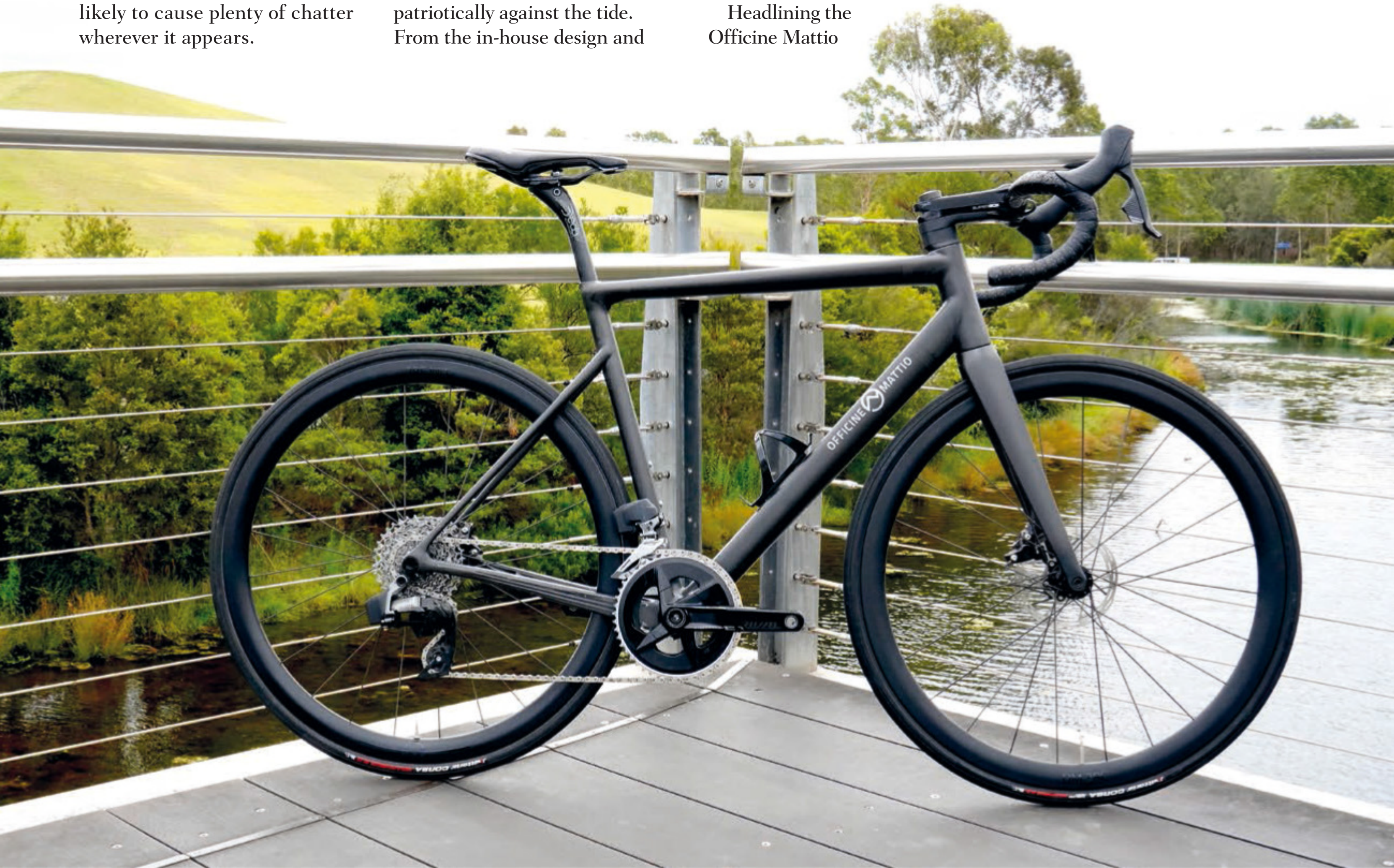
OFFICINE MATTIO

Translated as 'Mattio Workshops' in English, Officine Mattio was founded in the north-western corner of Italy in 2014 by Giovanni Roffarello, who continues to oversee the business as CEO.

At a time when so many European cycling brands are opting to manufacture and/or assemble their bikes offshore, Officine Mattio is swimming patriotically against the tide. From the in-house design and production of their custom frames and wheelsets to painting and hand-assembly, almost everything about these beautiful bikes happens within the picturesque Piedmont region, not far from the French-Italian border. The result is a small but hugely impressive stable of hand-crafted bicycles that can fly the Italian flag with an entirely clear conscience. They're pretty much as Italian as you can get.

Headlining the Officine Mattio

1. Love unique Italian bikes? This may be the one for you! Translated as 'Mattio Workshops' in English, Officine Mattio are from the north-western corner of Italy.
2. The one-piece stem and spacers are neatly integrated.
3. Cables are cleanly routed under the bars rather than being all internal.



OFFICINE MATTIO

1

SUPERBOX
Torque 5 Nm

2

SUPERBOX
Deda

3

range in 2023 is the Lemma 2.0. Named after the local alpine climb where Roffarello himself tested early prototypes, the Lemma was the very first frame released by Officine Mattio back in 2015. Eight years on, it's now entered its second generation. Officine Mattio refers to the Lemma 2.0 as an "agile integrated bike". Others have labelled it an "aero all-rounder". I'd simply call it one of the most beautifully-balanced road bikes I've ever had the good fortune to ride.

2023 OFFICINE MATTIO LEMMA 2.0

RRP:$13,990*
Colour: Black/raw carbon/silver graphics
Frame: Officine Mattio Lemma 2.0 Carbon, Disc
Fork: Officine Mattio Carbon F2, Disc
Handlebar: Deda Elementi Zero 2 POB
Stem: Deda Elementi Superbox
Seat post:Deda Elementi Superzero
Saddle: Selle Italia Flite Boost
Groupset:SRAM Rival eTap AXS 12-speed, Disc
Brakes:SRAM Rival hydraulic, flat mount
Rotors: SRAM Paceline (160mm front/140mm rear, centrelock)
Cassette: SRAM Rival, 10-36, 12-speed
Chain: SRAM Rival AXS
Crankset: SRAM Rival 48/35
Bottom Bracket: PF 386 Evo
Rims: Officine Mattio Quaranta CS 37mm (tubeless ready)
Spokes: Carbon/internal brass nipples
Hubs:Officine Mattio AL 7075 Ergal, Ceramic Speed bearings
Tyres: 28mm Vittoria Corsa Graphene 2.0 Clincher

* Pricing for review spec only. Multiple customisation options are available on the Officine Mattiowebsite.

Distributed in Australia by Italcycles.

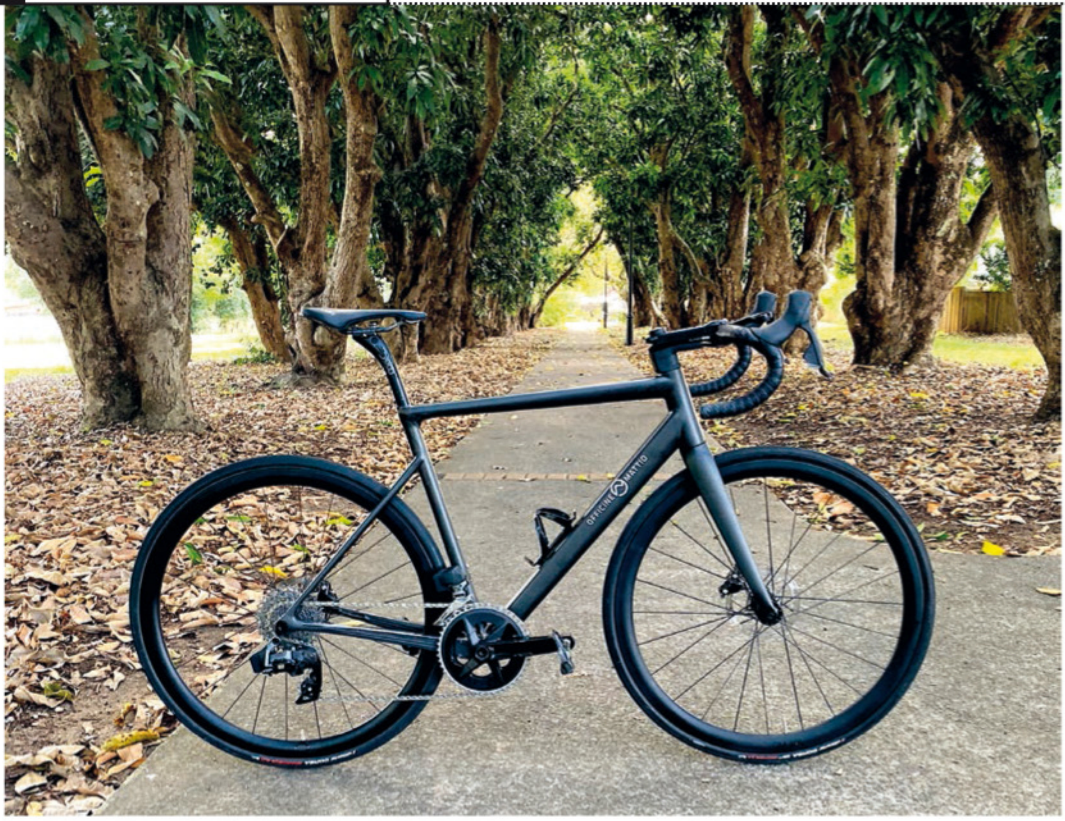
officinemattio.com

STYLING

Some bikes really scream out for your attention. The Lemma 2.0 isn't one of them, especially not with the raw carbon matt finish of the review model that arrived on my doorstep just before Christmas.

There's a calm and understated confidence about the styling, delivering a reasonably traditional silhouette with few overt flourishes or gimmicks. The design team have really opted for substance over style here; an approach that gets a big tick from me. This isn't to say there isn't much to talk about. Closer inspection of the Lemma 2.0 frame reveals some reasonably chunky tube profiles coupled with more subtle airfoil shaping on the forks, down tube and top tube, as well as dropped seat stays. With internal hose routing, wireless shifting and an elegant two-piece Deda cockpit, the lines are clean and unobstructed. The slender round seat post is adjusted with a discrete tightening bolt under the top tube, rejecting the more angular and/or integrated bespoke seat posts seen on many contemporary aero framesets, delivering a more conventional aesthetic whilst also aiding in vibration damping.

When it comes to livery, the Lemma 2.0 frame officially comes in three standard colourways. However, given Officine Mattio's online configurator allows you to customise pretty much every



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facet of the build should you wish – including the frame colour, graphics and logo decals, all of which are finished at Officine Mattio's dedicated coating facility – there's actually a kaleidoscope of combinations to choose from, so feel free to express yourself.

GEOMETRY

There's more than a hint of aero design at play in the Lemma 2.0. But this is no hardcore racing beast in the way it looks, or performs. Yes, the geometry is more aggressive than a typical endurance or climbing bike. But with a slightly longer headtube and wheelbase, coupled with more generous stack and standover, it's a little less compact, offering a more relaxed riding position than a pure aero build. Theory suggests this should make it a more versatile all-round riding choice and, as we'll get to in a moment, that was certainly my real-world experience.

WEIGHT

Just looking at it, you can tell the Lemma 2.0 is no wafer-thin supermodel. But nor is it a weight-laden leviathan. Unpainted, the Medium-sized frameset tips the scales at a respectable enough 900 grams. The complete review bike with bottle cages and pedals weighed in at 8.65kg. Whilst certainly not light, a significant chunk of this can be attributed to the excellent-but-hefty (and largely alloy) SRAM Rival AXS groupset which weighs over 3kg alone. If your budget can stretch to include a higher spec groupset, you'll instantly shave upwards of 600 grams.

> **"...IT'S TRULY FABULOUS TO RIDE ... However, you certainly do pay for the privilege..."**

FRAMESET

Whilst it may not quite be a Da Vinci or Michelangelo, the Lemma 2.0 frameset is indeed a work of Italian art. Hand-crafted from TORAYCA high performance carbon yarns, Officine Mattio uses a proprietary tube-to-tube process called IWS (Internal Wrap System). Rather than conventional processes where each tube is bonded together in a jig before being wrapped, bagged, pressurised and heated from the outside, the Lemma 2.0 frame is created with precisely controlled temperatures and high forming internal pressure that presses the carbon out towards the mould. Instead of having clear joins between each tube, this allows the carbon fibre to run uncut through the junctions on the Lemma 2.0 frame, reaching deep into each tube section. The result is a beautifully consistent structure with the enviable strength and streamlining qualities of monocoque moulding, whilst also allowing full custom frame geometry – a key point of difference for Officine Mattio. It's a genuinely bespoke approach with plenty of benefits to riders, especially those with unique geometry requirements, albeit at a price.

TECH & COMPONENTS

With the groupset an obvious exception – SRAM, Shimano and Campagnolo options are all available– every other element of the Lemma 2.0 is hand-crafted without leaving the Piedmont region of Italy. The exact specs of the review bike are listed at the end of this article. However, they're almost irrelevant because everything is assembled to order. Using the configurator on the Officine Mattio website, you can tinker away to your heart's content, tailoring everything from your preferred tube dimensions, braking system, groupset, stem and power meter to your wheels, hubs, tyres, saddle, colourways and even bar tape. It really is a case of choose your own adventure.

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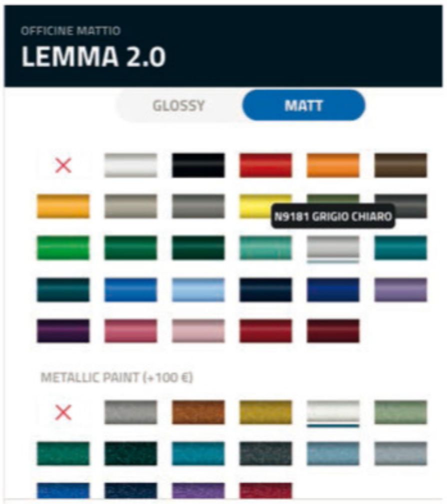
4. The review bike was equipped with SRAM, however, OM promote full builds with groupsets from all major manufacturers.
5. Ancient Greek in origin, λήμμα or Llêmma translates as premise or assumption. It's a suitably bold and confident name for the bike!

OM CONFIGURATOR


OFFICINE MATTIO
LEMMA 2.0

5

WHEELSET

For this review the Lemma 2.0 came fitted with Officine Mattio's excellent in-house tubeless-ready carbon wheelset, Quaranta CS. These wonderfully versatile 37mm hoops tip the scales at 1,496 grams and boast carbon spokes (24/24), internal brass nipples and measure 19mm/24mm (internal/external rim width). The aluminium alloy hubs feature silky smooth CeramicSpeed bearings and are produced exclusively for Officine Mattio by global bearings giant, SKF, in nearby Airasca on the outskirts of Turin. The review rims were fitted with 28mm Vittoria Corsa Graphene 2.0 clinchers. Again, there are numerous wheelset, hub and tyre options available. Maximum tyre clearance is 35mm.

ON THE ROAD

Quite simply, the Lemma 2.0 is a dream to ride. Equally at home on the flat or the hills, damp or dry, smooth tarmac or corrugated rural lanes, it took everything in its stride and was more than adept at dealing with the bumps that inevitably await on Australian roads. With minimal lateral flex, I found the ride quality was reassuringly firm, stable and controlled, accompanied by solid power transfer and just the right amount of road feedback. Not too much, not too little. Goldilocks would no doubt approve. The Lemma 2.0 was also extremely comfortable to ride, even over a pair of heavily-undulating 100km+ rides, something I'd attribute to a combination of the more relaxed frame geometry, forgiving rear section/seat post and cushiony 28mm tyres (clinchers). Install tubeless tyres at larger sizes and lower pressures and the suppleness of the ride will no doubt be even more pronounced. Handling was first-class across the board and, overall, I found the Lemma 2.0 very intuitive and easy to ride. It does exactly what you ask it to do and with few quirks I instantly felt very relaxed in the saddle, as if I'd owned it for years. Whilst more of an all-rounder than an out-and-out speed machine, it's certainly slick enough for the majority of us mere mortals – even more so should you opt for larger gearing (the review bike was fitted with a 48/35 compact chainring) – and wouldn't be out of place in a paceline or club criterium, delivering an excellent balance between refinement, robustness and responsiveness.

OVERALL

In an age of carbon ubiquity, the Officine Mattio Lemma 2.0 is a breath of fresh Italian alpine air. Richly versatile and almost endlessly customisable, it's a magnificent artisan road bike with an equally wonderful story. It's truly fabulous to ride. However, you certainly do pay for the privilege. Some will feel it's absolutely worth every dollar. Others less so. Ultimately, where you sit on this fundamental issue will heavily sway your view on what is undoubtedly a spectacular handmade machine. BA

SUMMING UP

QUALITY

A handmade Italian carbon frameset of the highest calibre. You get to specify the exact level of components that come with it too – so if you're not happy, look in the mirror.

PERFORMANCE

Fast enough and firm enough. Yet still surprisingly comfortable. Beautifully balanced handling. As adept on the local crit track as it is touring far-flung country roads.

VALUE

$13,990 for a bike with a third-tier groupset will likely be a stretch for many – and it's closer to $20,000 for top-of-the range components. How much is provenance worth to you?

OVERALL

Hand-crafted in Italy and fully customisable, the Lemma 2.0 is superb. It's not for the masses, but rather those who appreciate the finer details and want something genuinely different – and are willing to pay for it.

WORDS & IMAGES: RODERIC GILL

Exploro Ultra

IN HIS DEBUT BICYCLING AUSTRALIA REVIEW, RODERIC GILL DETAILS ONE OF THE ULTIMATE GRAVEL BIKES, THE 3T EXPLORO RACEMAX ULTRA.

THE EXCITINGLY NOISY GRAVEL biking scene seems to have settled into two main gravitational clusters: engineering-first pragmatism and marketing bling.

The bling is all about flex and springs, pseudo science and fashion branding. The pragmatic camp is all about engineering and historically informed evolution.

The king of pragmatism is Gerard Vroomen. He's an engineer, not a marketer. He co-owns two bike companies: Open and 3T. Not to mention being a co-founder of Cervelo. His bikes are always an expression of engineering rather than fashion. They trend via subtle refinement rather than marketing spin. Open doesn't even have a marketing department and I am pretty sure 3T doesn't either.

3T is an esteemed, venerable Italian maker of astoundingly wonderful handlebars, stems, seat posts, and other tubular contrivances that have adorned high end bikes from the dawn of cycling. With Vroomen's ascendancy to the 3T helm (aka, he bought the business a few years ago), came the quietly industry shaking, aero Exploro way back in 2016.

The Exploro is NOT, we are told, just a gravel bike. No no. It's the modern statement of versatility in bicycles for the real world of junk roads and adventurous places. For me, the Exploro (and the Open UP) is a bike for we rural folk who seek to live with rather than rail against the inevitability of gravel and post-apocalyptic sealed roads.

Vroomen makes quietly inspired bikes for rugged places. For me, rugged places is where I live; 4.5km from my front door is all it takes to enter an infinite universe of ultra quiet gravel roads.

Gerard has lots to say about gravel bike engineering, while consistently suggesting that he and his bikes are not just about gravel. His thing is versatility and real world applications: pragmatism. Here are a few memes from the Vroomen design playbook:

- If you feel that a gravel bike needs suspension, buy a mountain bike
- Mountain bikes ridden on sealed roads and on good fast gravel are a misery
- Gravel bike aero should be 'practical' rather than 'fashionable' so, joy of joys, no cable integrated cockpits!
- Aero helps you win gravel races
- Aero should NOT imply absence of compliance and comfort
- Compliance comes from lots of air volume in your tyres
- Dropped chain stays are a Vroomen 'thing'
- 27.5/650b wheels are tuned to dropped chain stays
- And above all, stop fixating on 'gravel' and consider instead all-road versatility.

Which is where the band new Exploro Ultra comes in.

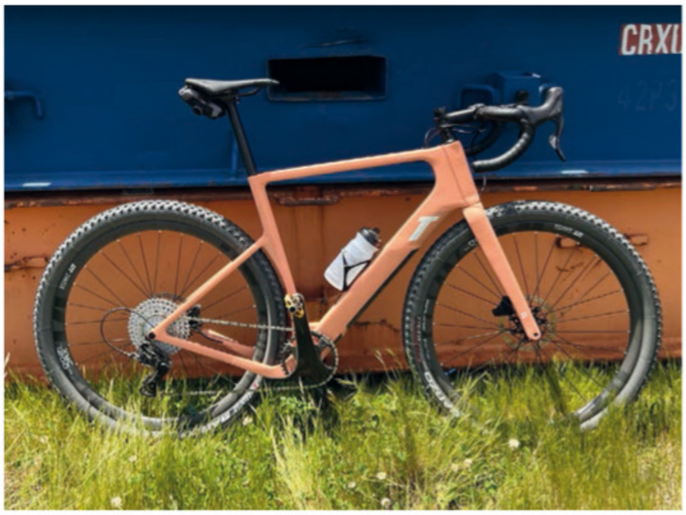
The Ultra is an iteration on the RaceMax where the latter is 'optimised' for tyres that are 46mm or narrower and the former for larger than 46mm tyres.There is more than a little engineering difference behind these models; mostly in tube shaping, lay-up and geometry. The most obvious difference is that the Ultra has a larger downtube and has a differently shaped head tube (and larger steerer bearings to suit). The rest is subtle, but real. Roadies will be impressed by the new bike's 72/73 degree head/seat tube angles (size L/56 frame). More road than mountain bike like.

Possibly confusingly, the new Ultra comes in two versions. One is optioned with 700c wheels and the other comes with 650B wheels. Mine is the 650B model but I have 700c wheels installed…

So, how does the Ultra ride?

My context for judging this includes the fact that I also have seven other gravel bikes, including the astoundingly wonderful Lauf True Grit, an Open UPPER, the latest Cervelo Aspero 5 and a Lauf sprung Exploro Ltd.

The new Ultra is literally more of everything in comparison with, say, the Exploro Limited. It is as capable at climbing as the 38mm shod Cervelo Aspero



With the added ability of a cross country mountain bike, this custom 3T Racemax is fitted with 650B wheels and super-wide tyres. Swap the wheels to 700c's with 28-32mm road rubber, and the bike morphs into a legitimate allrounder.

> "…FOR ME, THE EXPLORO IS A BIKE FOR WE RURAL FOLK WHO SEEK TO LIVE WITH rather than rail against the inevitability of gravel and post-apocalyptic sealed roads…"

5 even with 2.1inch tyres on the Ultra! That is astounding, in my view. The new Ultra with it's Campagnolo Ekar groupo and Levante carbon wheel set is only 7.7kg (size L/56 frame). Yes, this new Ultra is deceptively light!

The aero Ultra is fast on good gravel roads, especially in head winds. Best of all, this feeling of speed hangs in there on both 650B and 700c wheel options. Basically, I can't believe how fast this bike goes with fat 2.1inch tyres!

And then there is the precision of handling. There is a surprisingly smooth transition from, say, my Colnago C68 to the Ultra, not the canyon jump you might expect. Yes, I did make that comparison. Yes, the Colnago C68 is more 'precise and tuned' than the Exploro, of course. But not by as much as you might think. Yes, on a 100km sealed road ride I would be outpaced by a serious roadie. But I suspect the Exploro is the more 'Council proof' design.

How about the all important compliance? Let me summarise with an anecdote. One of the most ridden downhills on my local collection of gravel road routes is a 10km segment strategically arranged with wash outs, corrugations, big rocks, rocky speed bumps, and lots of potholes. My usual routine with every bike I have is to ride most of this descent out of the saddle. And dream of front suspension… With the 650B, 2.1inch tyre combination in place and air pressure down to 35psi front and back, I can report my first ever descent on the Ultra was entirely seated. I am impressed. So I did it again with 700c wheels. Same result.

It's not just tyres. It's this bike's geometry, carefully designed and engineered forks, the lovely 3T Superergo handlebars and 3T zero offset carbon round seat post (this bike can take a dropper if you want).

The Ultra comes with basic aluminium Fulcrum 650B

ABOVE: Replacing the near 2kg factory Fulcrum wheelset is the best thing the owner has ever done to the bike. Now fitted with Levante's – the first Campagnolo wheels specifically designed for gravel – the ride and climbing ability has been completely transformed.

RIGHT & ABOVE RIGHT: The bike features Campagnolo's 13-speed Ekar groupset – the world's lightest gravel-specific groupo.

wheels. I replaced them with a set of DT Swiss XMC 1200 27.5 wheels for the fatties and the astoundingly magnificent new Campagnolo Levante 700c wheels for tyres up to 46 mm WAM (Gerard Vroomen's Width As Measured standard). The latter are shod in Panaracer Gravel King 43's and the XMC's in the Vittoria Barzo 2.1 inch tyres that came with the bike.

The Levante wheel set was designed for gravel. Internal width is 25mm and overall weight is 1.4kg. Compliance is simply amazing, but never at the expense of climbing power. Who needs an e-bike with these wheels! They are the Boras of the gravel world.

This Exploro Ultra is considerably more compliant and has sharper, more precise handling than my original Exploro Ltd. And that is saying something.

I do confess, though, that the main reason why I decided to get my new Ultra was for its Campagnolo's Ekar groupset. The shifting is superb. The 13 speeds are genius clever in terms of range and spacing (9 to 42 teeth). The braking has the best modulation in the business. And best of all: no batteries!

The retail AUD$ rate for the Exploro Ultra Ekar is around $9,000. Throw out the standard wheels and tractor saddle and grab some DT Swiss or the new Campy Levantes along with a real saddle and you'd be paying around AUD$13,000. Expensive but competitive with, say, the marketing extravaganzas from Specialized.

The down side is that Exploro's can be hard to get in Australia. For now, you can get them on Bike Exchange.

Oh, and check out the colour! It's called 'Copper'. It's a very matt finish. Very hard to keep clean! Very distinctive!

To summarise, the 3T Exploro Ultra Ekar is at the cutting edge of perfection with regard to the long evolution of the gravel bike genre. It's so well designed and engineered that I can't imagine why I would ever want a bike with springs and flexy frame bits. Thank you Gerard Vroomen.

SPECIFICATIONS

Frame: 3T Exploro Racemax

Fork: 3T Fango RaceMax w/ compact crown

Head Set: 3T MinMax IS42/28.6 + IS 47/38

Stem: 3T Apto Stealth

Handlebars: 3T Aeroflux LTD

Saddle: Selle Italia Model X Superflow

Seat post: New 3T Charlie Sqaero Team w/ Ritchey WCS Clamp

Shift Levers: Campag Ekar

Brakes: Campag Ekar Disc

Front derailleur: N/A

Rear Derailleur: Campagnolo Ekar

Cassette: Ekar 13sp 9-42T

Chain: Campagnolo

Crank: Ekar carbon fiber

Bottom Bracket: Campag NW3

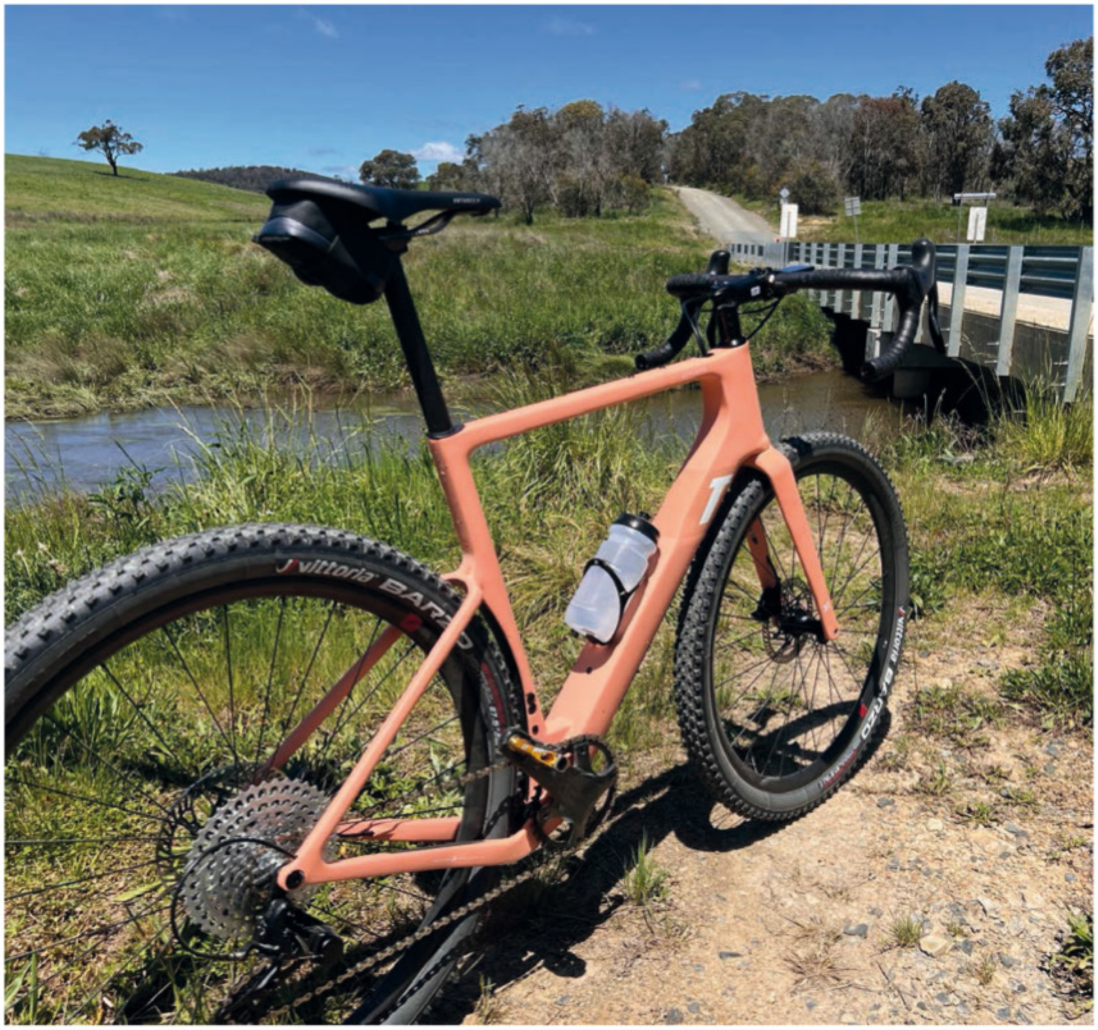
Wheels: Campagnolo Levante

Tyres: Vittoria Rubino650B 47mm

Bidon Cage: Custom carbon

Weight: Around 8kg

Price: $8,500 + wheels



WORDS & IMAGES: PAT JONKER

Next Generation Soloist

NO STRANGER TO THE LEGENDARY CERVELO SOLOIST, FORMER PRO PAT JONKER TEST RIDES THE REVISED MODEL.

THIS PAGE: A lean, clean and totally reinvigorated machine, the 2023 Soloist from Cervelo. OPPOSITE: Pat Jonker wearing old school CSC kit – the team that raced the original Soloist – as he test rides the modern classic.

CERVELO SOLOIST WITH SRAM RIVAL ETAP AXS 12 SPD

I have been writing reviews for a while now and racing bikes for way too many decades. It's not often that I'm blown away, well sometimes in the crosswinds ... but not by too many bikes. But with this relatively new release things are different, this machine. this super-bike, is simply mind blowing.

Before we delve into my review of the Soloist we must touch on its history as the fact this bike is a reincarnation of the original Soloist.

That was the legendary bike Team CSC were very successfully racing 20-years ago. Think Carlos Sastre, Fabian Cancellara and a little later our own Stuart O'Grady, who still raves about his 2005 model Soloist.

THE HISTORY OF THE SOLOIST

Back in 2002 Team CSC decided to work with Cervelo which, at the time, was a very young and ambitious racing bike manufacturer. Founded by Gerard Vroomen and Phil White, they were seen as renegade designers, especially with their philosophy on aerodynamics, which later proved to become the norm for all frame builders.

Team CSC went from a ranking of #12 in the world to #1 while on the Cervelo Soloist. Was this all to do with the bikes and aerodynamics? Well, probably not, but a combination of both amazing riders and an amazing racing machine certainly had to have contributed.

The Cervelo Soloist cemented its name in the history books of pro cycling as a superbike and now it's back.

Re-engineered up to today's standard and probably beyond, we are talking lighter than the Cervelo S series. It's approximately 250 grams lighter and definitely more aerodynamic than the Cervelo R series but 250g heavier. To the geometry, and it is more aggressive than the Caledonia series, so definitely not a touring bike. The Soloist slots in perfectly – and certainly ticks all the boxes – for the serious racer or club rider.

THE UNBOXING

Straight out of the box, the Soloist is an impressive-looking steed and definitely an aero-looking racing machine – there's absolutely no doubt about that. And the black

colour way I had especially came alive once it hit the sunlight, it seriously dazzled. Looking smooth and fast, the bike weighed in at 7.5kg without pedals which is pretty good in my books for a disc braked racing machine. The frame comes in at 920g and 374g for the fork so that's around 250g lighter than the Cervelo S5 and 250g heavier than the R5.

The Soloist comes with a shallow wheelset which also saves some weight; Fulcrum Racing 600 on the test bike.

All cables are routed internally; the standard head stem seemed a bit short, but that's easily fixed as it's not a one-piece moulded unit so changing stems is a breeze. We will get into that a little later.

I also liked the fact it came with a quality saddle, the Sella Italia model X, and the SRAM Rival eTap AXS 12 Spd finished off the build nicely.

SPECIFICATIONS

Frame: Soloist Carbon Fiber

Fork: Cervélo All-Carbon, Tapered Soloist Fork

Head Set: FSA 1.25 x 1.5"

Stem: Cervelo ST36 Alloy

Handlebars: Cervelo AB07 Alloy, 31.8mm

Saddle: Selle Italia NOVUS BOOST EVO SuperFlow

Seat post: Cervelo carbon

Shift Levers: SRAM Rival

Brakes: SRAM Rival Flatmount

Front derailleur: SRAM Rival eTap

Rear Derailleur: SRAM Rival eTap

Cassette: SRAM Rival 11-32

Chain: SRAM Rival

Crank: SRAM Rival Alloy

Bottom Bracket: SRAM DUB, T47 BBright

Wheels: Fulcrum Racing 600 DB, 12x100(F)/142(R)

Tyres: Corsa N.EXT TLR G2.0 700x28c

Bidon Cage: N/A

Weight: Around 8kg

Price: $7000

Distributor: Cervelo Australia

CSC
NOBILI
cervélo

ABOVE: The base model features a clean cockpit with a brushed alloy stem and semi-concealed cables.

TEST RIDING THE SOLOIST

In Cervelo's own words the bike is "Far from being pros-only, the new Soloist has been designed for the week-in, week-out amateur racer. It balances lightweight and aerodynamic performance to deliver a bike that really is just right."

Let's get this beauty on the road and my planned ride was a 90 kilometre hilly loop around the McLaren Vale and the Willunga Hill region south of Adelaide.

I think it's important to mention the factory tyres which are Vittoria Rubino Pro 28mm with a suggested 80psi on the front and 90psi on the rear. That's for my weight of 78kgs. Note: the Rubino tyres are a little slow and not my ideal choice so I took that into consideration during the ride.

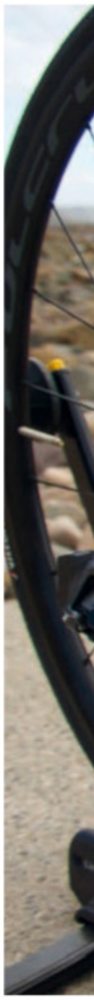
The frame can take up to 34mm tyres, which is great news as the cycling industry and riders slowly accept larger volume tyres and lower pressures. These widths can make for an even more comfortable ride and no loss of speed.

First ride impressions for me were of the rigidity of the frame and overall comfort of the bike. Ok, I'm not pumping massive watts like the old days, but it's clearly a very stiff frame. The oversized bottom bracket design was doing what it was designed to do and stop any flex while out of the saddle climbing or sprinting on the flats with also no creaking to be heard, which you would expect from a threaded BB.

Not everyone is a fan of the T-47 used by Cervelo on this bike, but it's also about the ease of changing over BBs, which makes a lot of sense to me.

The head and seat tube angles are 73-degrees on the 56cm Soloist which made the bike feel aggressive but still well balanced. And the slightly longer wheelbase helps the overall ride, but it's

BELOW & RIGHT: Former pro rider Pat Jonker puts the SRAM eTap Rival equipped second-generation Soloist through its paces on the roads around Adelaide.



important to note it's not the same feel as the Cervelo S5 which to me feels super aggressive. I found the Soloist to offer a better feel for the all-rounder.

To the cockpit area, and it looked slick and felt great. The bars are non aero shaped out of the box and were very comfortable to ride. If you are more into a super aero look and feel, then a handlebar changeover isn't too complicated.

The Soloist doesn't have the fully integrated routed system such as the S5 or many other aero racing machines. What it does have is a slick under-stem routing system for the brake hoses and gear cables. This makes changing head-stem lengths or bars an absolute breeze, plus it's a slick and neat looking system.

DESCENDING

The Soloist handles like a dream on the faster 5 kilometre descents around the Adelaide Hills. The SRAM Rival eTap AXS groupset did its job without any mis-shifting or noisy changes. The disc brakes worked a treat with no squealing during heavy braking and no pad rub. The braking modulation was faultless. To the Rubino tyres, and as they weren't properly run in they did feel a little slow, so I was not taking too many risks. That said, they could still reach speeds up to 65km/h and never felt uncomfortable. Finaly on descending, I always felt in control; Cervelo have certainly nailed the geometry on this bike.

THE GROUPSET OFFERINGS

Cervelo offer various choices Shimano 105 Di2, 105 mechanical, Ultegra Di2, SRAM force eTap and AXS Rival Etap AXS. Now all these groupsets work a treat and it's really a personal choice; the new 105 Di2 is that good and so well priced it's going to be a difficult decision, but whatever you decide you can't go wrong.

I like to swap out my head stems and sometimes even bars and with the Soloist swapping is a breeze, unlike many of its competitors where it can take a mechanic half a day to swap a head stem it only takes minutes with the Soloist. This is mainly because the cables are not routed through the stem, and instead are held under the stem This allows the stem to be removed or changed without needing to bleed the brakes, which is beneficial not only for position changes but also transportation.

In a nutshell, you must ask yourself why you would spend over $12k-15k for an aero racing machine when you can get the same performance for under $10k. Bravo Cervelo. Now you have developed something that is going to be very hard for any manufacturer to beat, including Cervelo.

Finally, the Soloist comes in three different colour ways – Embers (sparkly black) Alpenglow (sparkly white) and Gold Dust.

PROS

The excellent ride feel. Lightweight meets aerodynamics. Easy to remove bars and stems which suits travellers. The best value-for-money racing machine and also suitable for serious Gran Fondo and club riders.

CONS

Not a fan of the Rubino tyres, that's an easy swap. Also, I prefer deeper dish wheelsets.

CONCLUSION

Cervelo has just thrown a spanner in the works by developing an awesome thoroughbred racing machine for under $10k. See your local dealer for a test ride. BA

WORDS & IMAGES: LEE 'HOLLYWOOD' TURNER

The Rules Revisited

LOVE THEM OR LOATHE THEM 'THE RULES' ARE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF OUR SPORT. IN THIS TIMELY 2023 UPDATE, LEE TURNER OFFERS A REFRESHER.

IT'S A NEW YEAR AND THERE'S BEEN SOME conjecture and debate over some of the cycling fashion rules. A critical aspect of our sport, we need to discuss this.

There are certain unspoken rules when it comes to cycling fashion. They have been well documented over time, however, it's time to update some of them. Due to my lack of cycling ability, I have tried very hard to make sure I present well whilst riding. "Look good first, worry about everything else second," has been a motto of mine for a while now. Yep, I want to look good when getting dropped in a race or by a bunch, and I'm sure you feel the same.

The first that has been getting a lot of discussion of late is socks over or under leg warmers. Do you wear warmers over or under your socks? I want to set the record straight. Socks are to be worn over leg warmers unless the leg warmers have a zip. If you are wearing one-piece longs, then socks should go underneath and that is because a lot of the time they have logos and branding down low. Logos shouldn't be covered. If you are wearing booties or overshoes, under no circumstances should your leg warmers or longs be worn over them.

If you are wearing leg warmers or one-piece long bibs, then you should always be wearing a long sleeve jersey or at least arm warmers. I know I've seen some pros wear leg warmers and short sleeve in some races, and I remember seeing my mate ex-pro Jeremy Hunt do it also. That said, I just can't get my head around it. Pros can pull it off, I just don't think ordinary people like you or I should. It just doesn't look right, but I guess disc brakes looked hideous at first and now they're acceptable. Knee warmers can still be worn, although I don't like them. I think they are pointless; you should either wear leg warmers or nothing.

I'm not a big fan of mixing brands. If I am wearing a Blacksheep jersey I don't want to be wearing MAAP bibs – you've got to keep the brands aligned. There are exceptions like when the colour match is undeniable, but this is a very rare exception. If you can, please stick to one brand for each outfit.

Starting from the bottom and working our way up let's begin with shoes. Shoes should never be black. Black shoes are for school kids. Crisp white shoes are best (I know I wear yellow, but this is to match my team kit). If you do have black shoes, use them in winter and always put white or coloured overshoes on top of them. I have two pairs of white and six pairs of yellow shoes. You need a wet weather pair, an everyday pair and a race pair. Yes, it's over the top but this is the price you pay to look good.

Socks should match the shoe colour most of the time but matching the colour of your jersey or bibs if it's prominent is OK too. And as mentioned earlier, overshoes or booties should always be worn over the top of leg warmers or longs. Oh, and helmet colour should always match shoe colour as well.

I've seen quite a few people still wearing glasses under their helmet straps, particularly with the Oakley Sutro glasses because they are light and will come off if you turn your head in the wind. All this doesn't matter, glasses should be worn over the straps. A little fact a lot of people don't know is if you crash like I did recently, you want your glasses to come off your head and not be stuck under there. They can smash and break into your face if they are stuck in the strap. Nothing screams un-pro than glasses under helmet straps -please don't do this.

I've written about this previously, but legs MUST always be shaved. Nothing screams "not fair dinkum" more than unshaven legs.

And please don't wear your cycling sunglasses outside of cycling. It looks totally uncool and geeky wearing your Koo, SunGod, Sutro or 100% glasses with casual wear.

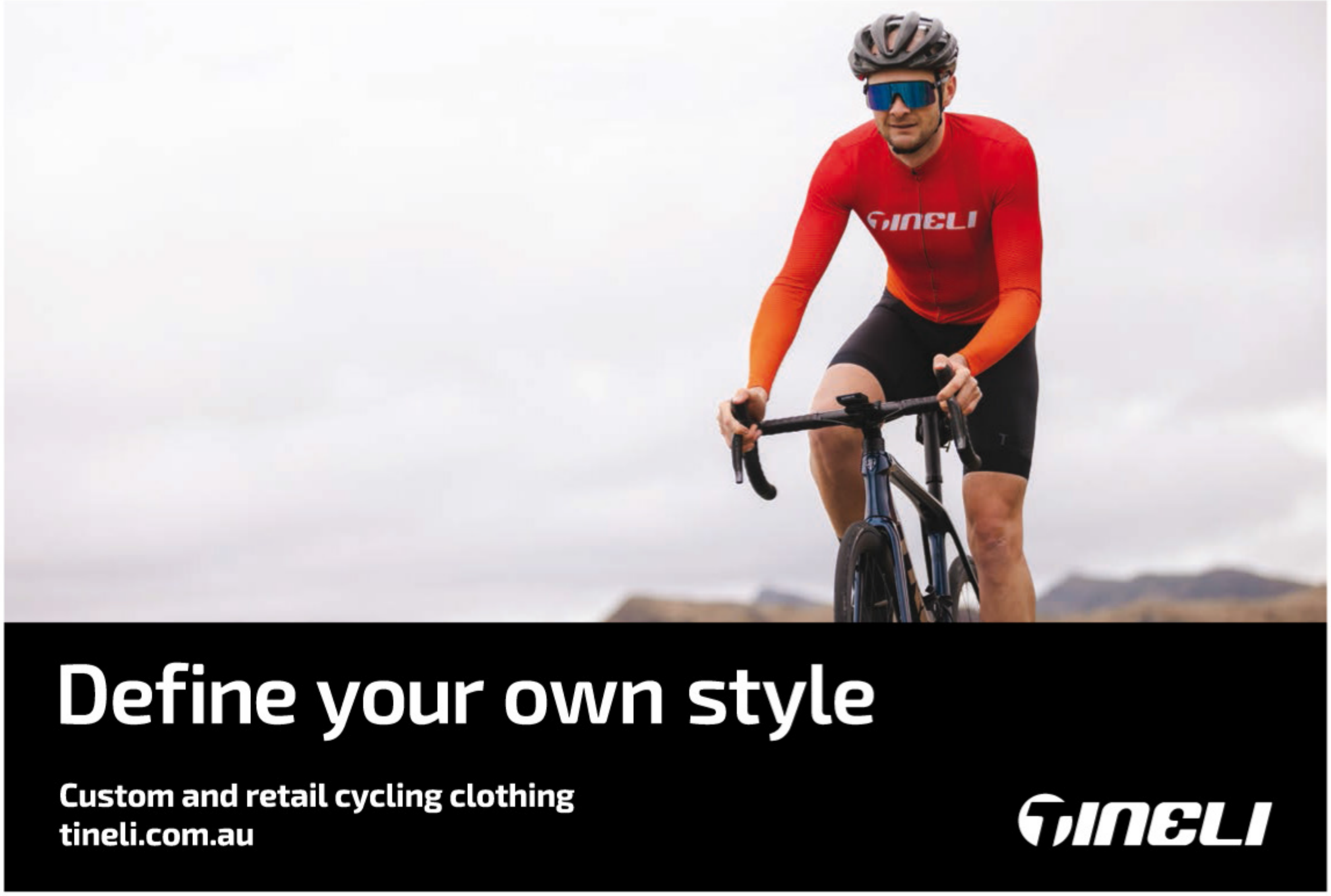
Do not wear a cycling cap under your helmet unless it is pouring rain and that's it. Thermal caps are fine when it is below 5 degrees, but too many people wear cycling caps under their helmet. This is both unnecessary and very uncool. Cycling caps are for the café when you stop.

Finally, if you're riding in a bunch, please don't wear headphones. It is rude, dangerous and disrespectful.

Wrapping it up, please don't get upset with me if you don't like the rules. I'm just here to uphold the laws of cycling fashion. The most important rule is cycling is fun, so wear and do what you bloody well like. BA

"...I am just here to uphold the LAWS OF CYCLING FASHION..."

ABOVE: Jacky Moon at the Santos Tour Down Under and (MAIN IMAGE) cycling fashionistas Lee Turner, Chris Papakostas and Alison McCormack.



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ABOVE: The 2023 Elite Women's Road Race National Championship podium of Grace Brown, Brodie Chapman and Amanda Spratt. Photo courtesy of Con Chronis/ AusCycling. RIGHT: National TT Champion Jay Vine.

The Buninyong Factor

COULD ANOTHER LOCATION PRODUCE SUCH EXCITING RACING YEAR AFTER YEAR, UNEARTH SUCH A DIVERSE GROUP OF WINNERS, OR DRAW THE SAME LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT? LITTLE WONDER BALLARAT REMAINS THE HOME OF THE AUSTRALIAN ROAD CHAMPS, WRITES ANTHONY TAN.

YOU KNOW IT'S BEEN A TOUGH day at the office when you begin with a start list of 113 riders and after 16 laps/185.6km around Mount Buninyong, the computer records just 24 finishers.

The attrition rate for the women's race (9 laps/104.4km) was far better at 66 per cent, with 52 finishers from an original 79-rider start list.

Ever since the Australian road nationals has been held in Ballarat, it's always been like this. As is the situation before the race, all eyes are focused on Australia's only WorldTour team, called Jayco-AlUla in 2023.

First incarnated as GreenEDGE Cycling in 2012, the expectation in Buninyong is that it is their race to lose – and for the first three editions they didn't, thanks to Simon Gerrans (2012, '14) and Luke Durbridge (2013).

But as we know in professional sport, just because you have the numbers or the quality doesn't guarantee you victory.

A DIVERSE WINNERS' LIST

In fact, from 2015-23, the elite men's race has gone the way of athletes not from GreenEDGE more than it has (six out of nine occasions); for the elite women, GreenEDGE athletes have succeeded more times than they have not (7/12 wins from 2012-23, three thanks to Amanda Spratt, now riding for Trek-Segafredo).

As hard and hilly as the 11.6 kilometre Buninyong circuit is, for both men and women, the riders that have tasted success have been varied. Sprinters Robbie McEwen (2005) and Heinrich Haussler (2015) have triumphed, as has mountain goat Matthew Lloyd (2008) and time triallist cum cobbled Classics man Durbridge (2013). Ardennes Classics specialists like Gerrans have had their day in the sun, and between them, all-rounders Cameron Meyer and Luke Plapp have taken out the past four editions, both going back-to-back.

Interestingly, Cadel Evans and Jai Hindley, so far our only

two Grand Tour winners (Evans also being our only elite men's road world champion), failed to discover their pot of gold in Ballarat, though Cadel came close in 2014. Alas for him, he was no match for Gerrans in a three-up sprint finish, as was the third place getter, Richie Porte, who also finished third in 2012, again behind Gerrans.

It in large part explains why riders like Tadej Pogačar and Wout van Aert win so many races other than their supposed speciality, which for the former is general classification at Grand Tours and for the latter, Spring Classics. Yet the breadth of races the aforementioned pair have won is so diverse that I would argue that simply winning is their metier. They are both Merckxian in their approach to racing: "If I put on a number, the aim is to win", goes the thought process. That both possess not just preternatural talent and strength but are still quick at the end of a four-to-six hour race solidifies their self-belief that if they want to win, they often can.

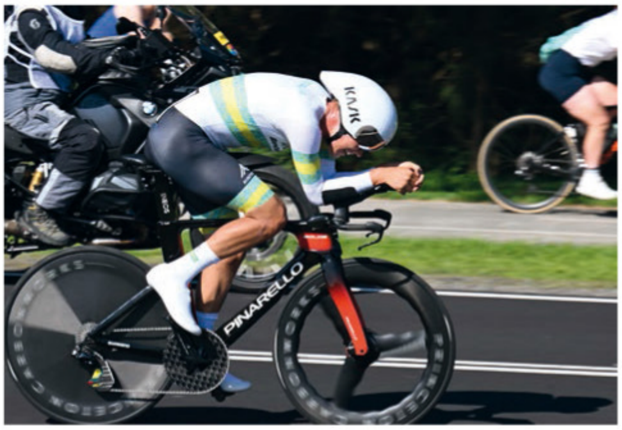
> "...for a 22-year-old second-year pro **TO UPSTAGE HIS FAR MORE EXPERIENCED COMPATRIOTS** for a second year running? Amazing..."

GOING SOLO IN BUNINYONG

In the elite men's division, six out of the past 10 editions of the Aussie road champs have been won from a lone escape; it's 5/10 for the elite women. So fortune favours the brave in Buninyong – but as Plapp found out in 2021 when, from a seemingly winning position, he self-imploded, it's better to be brave later than sooner.

For a rider like Caleb Ewan, he has no option but to hang on and hope for the best. I think he was climbing better when he ran second to Haussler in 2015, but in the past five years the New South Welshman has made his focus big bunch sprints and has bulked up accordingly, so he's got more powerful and faster – just not on long uphills.

Interestingly, before the race he said "Team Jayco AlUla probably holds the key. They have a strong contingent of riders and will do everything to avoid a sprint." Yet by my reckoning, Jayco AlUla's trump was always Michael Matthews,



RIGHT: Michael Matthews wins the sprint jersey at the 2023 Tour Down Under. A pro rider since 2010, 'Bling' continues to showcase consistent and exceptional talent.

BELOW: Lucas Plapp competing in the U23 World Championships TT, and (RIGHT) wearing his green and gold stripes as two-time Aussie champion (2022 & 2023).

who clearly wanted a small group to come to the line. While Ewan said afterwards he "had that good day" he was hoping for, the pace was simply too high for him to hang on, and for Matthews, the "big target on my back" forced him to chase down Plapp on the three occasions he took flight, the last being a bridge too far.

It obviously left 'Bling' without the shine to do his usual sprint, beaten by stalwart Simon Clarke for the silver medal. "At some point you have to gamble a little bit and hope the other two do a pull to try to get him (Plapp) back. Unfortunately we gambled at the wrong time and he pulled away," said Matthews after four hours and forty minutes in the saddle.

> **"...They are both Merckxian in their approach to racing: "...IF I PUT ON A NUMBER, THE AIM IS TO WIN'...."**

BRIGHT LIGHTS

However, the vast majority of bike races are won not from solo escapes but a small or large group. Meaning that, if the finish line is not on an impossibly steep mountain and you're missing a fast finish, you're better off working for someone who's got one.

Which is why, by the time you read this and many of these boys are back racing in Europe, Plapp will be proudly wearing his green and gold striped jersey and custom-coloured Pinarello, but for the most part he'll be working his butt off for the big names at Ineos Grenadiers, while Ewan and Matthews will reassume leadership positions at their respective teams.

Still, for a 22-year-old second-year pro to upstage his far more experienced compatriots for a second year running? Amazing.

And how about third-year pro Jay Vine winning the elite men's time trial two days later? Surely the upset of the Road Nationals! This is a guy who, talent-identified after winning the 2020 Zwift Academy program, gets catapulted into the WorldTour a year later, then two years after that wins two mountain-top stages of the Vuelta a España.

As hard as it is to become – and then remain – a professional cyclist, we continue to produce and unearth exceptional talents.

The prospects are very bright for Australian cycling, now and into the future. BA

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